

# Second World War and its Aftermath

**Terrance Peters**



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AND  
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## **Chapter 1**

# **World War II**

World War II or the Second World War, often abbreviated as WWII or WW2, was a global war that lasted from 1939 to 1945. It involved the vast majority of the world's countries—including all of the great powers—forming two opposing military alliances: the Allies and the Axis powers. In a total war directly involving more than 100 million personnel from more than 30 countries, the major participants threw their entire economic, industrial, and scientific capabilities behind the war effort, blurring the distinction between civilian and military resources. Aircraft played a major role in the conflict, enabling the strategic bombing of population centres and the only two uses of nuclear weapons in war to this day. World War II was by far the deadliest conflict in human history, and resulted in 70 to 85 million fatalities, a majority being civilians. Tens of millions of people died due to genocides (including the Holocaust), starvation, massacres, and disease. In the wake of the Axis defeat, Germany and Japan were occupied, and war crimes tribunals were conducted against German and Japanese leaders.

World War II is generally considered to have begun on 1 September 1939, when Nazi Germany, under Adolf Hitler, invaded Poland. The United Kingdom and France subsequently declared war on Germany on the 3rd. Under the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact of August 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union had partitioned Poland and marked out their "spheres of influence" across Finland, Romania and the Baltic states. From late 1939 to early 1941, in a series of campaigns and treaties,



Germany conquered or controlled much of continental Europe, and formed the Axis alliance with Italy and Japan (along with other countries later on). Following the onset of campaigns in North Africa and East Africa, and the fall of France in mid-1940, the war continued primarily between the European Axis powers and the British Empire, with war in the Balkans, the aerial Battle of Britain, the Blitz of the UK, and the Battle of the Atlantic. On 22 June 1941, Germany led the European Axis powers in an invasion of the Soviet Union, opening the Eastern Front, the largest land theatre of war in history and trapping the Axis powers, crucially the German *Wehrmacht*, in a war of attrition.

Japan, which aimed to dominate Asia and the Pacific, was at war with the Republic of China by 1937. In December 1941, Japan attacked American and British territories with near-simultaneous offensives against Southeast Asia and the Central Pacific, including an attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbor which forced the US to declare war against Japan; the European Axis powers declared war on the US in solidarity. Japan soon captured much of the western Pacific, but its advances were halted in 1942 after losing the critical Battle of Midway; later, Germany and Italy were defeated in North Africa and at Stalingrad in the Soviet Union. Key setbacks in 1943—including a series of German defeats on the Eastern Front, the Allied invasions of Sicily and the Italian mainland, and Allied offensives in the Pacific—cost the Axis powers their initiative and forced it into strategic retreat on all fronts.

In 1944, the Western Allies invaded German-occupied France, while the Soviet Union regained its territorial losses and turned towards Germany and its allies. During 1944 and 1945,

Japan suffered reversals in mainland Asia, while the Allies crippled the Japanese Navy and captured key western Pacific islands.

The war in Europe concluded with the liberation of German-occupied territories, and the invasion of Germany by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union, culminating in the fall of Berlin to Soviet troops, Hitler's suicide and the German unconditional surrender on 8 May 1945. Following the Potsdam Declaration by the Allies on 26 July 1945 and the refusal of Japan to surrender on its terms, the United States dropped the first atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima, on 6 August, and Nagasaki, on 9 August. Faced with an imminent invasion of the Japanese archipelago, the possibility of additional atomic bombings, and the Soviet entry into the war against Japan and its invasion of Manchuria, Japan announced its intention to surrender on 15 August, then signed the surrender document on 2 September 1945, cementing total victory in Asia for the Allies.

World War II changed the political alignment and social structure of the globe. The United Nations (UN) was established to foster international co-operation and prevent future conflicts, and the victorious great powers—China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States—became the permanent members of its Security Council. The Soviet Union and the United States emerged as rival superpowers, setting the stage for the nearly half-century-long Cold War. In the wake of European devastation, the influence of its great powers waned, triggering the decolonisation of Africa and Asia. Most countries whose industries had been damaged moved towards economic

recovery and expansion. Political integration, especially in Europe, began as an effort to forestall future hostilities, end pre-war enmities and forge a sense of common identity.

## **Chronology**

The war in Europe is generally considered to have started on 1 September 1939, beginning with the German invasion of Poland; the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany two days later. The dates for the beginning of war in the Pacific include the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War on 7 July 1937, or the earlier Japanese invasion of Manchuria, on 19 September 1931.

Others follow the British historian A. J. P. Taylor, who held that the Sino-Japanese War and war in Europe and its colonies occurred simultaneously, and the two wars merged in 1941. This article uses conventional dating. Other starting dates sometimes used for World War II include the Italian invasion of Abyssinia on 3 October 1935. The British historian Antony Beevor views the beginning of World War II as the Battles of KhalkhinGol fought between Japan and the forces of Mongolia and the Soviet Union from May to September 1939. Others view the Spanish Civil War as the start or prelude to World War II.

The exact date of the war's end is also not universally agreed upon. It was generally accepted at the time that the war ended with the armistice of 14 August 1945 (V-J Day), rather than with the formal surrender of Japan on 2 September 1945, which officially ended the war in Asia. A peace treaty between Japan and the Allies was signed in 1951. A 1990 treaty regarding Germany's future allowed the reunification of East

and West Germany to take place and resolved most post-World War II issues. No formal peace treaty between Japan and the Soviet Union was ever signed.

## **Background**

### **Europe**

World War I had radically altered the political European map, with the defeat of the Central Powers—including Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire—and the 1917 Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia, which led to the founding of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, the victorious Allies of World War I, such as France, Belgium, Italy, Romania, and Greece, gained territory, and new nation-states were created out of the collapse of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman and Russian Empires.

To prevent a future world war, the League of Nations was created during the 1919 Paris Peace Conference. The organisation's primary goals were to prevent armed conflict through collective security, military and naval disarmament, and settling international disputes through peaceful negotiations and arbitration.

Despite strong pacifist sentiment after World War I, irredentist and revanchist nationalism emerged in several European states in the same period. These sentiments were especially marked in Germany because of the significant territorial, colonial, and financial losses imposed by the Treaty of Versailles. Under the treaty, Germany lost around 13 percent of its home territory and all its overseas possessions, while German annexation of

other states was prohibited, reparations were imposed, and limits were placed on the size and capability of the country's armed forces.

The German Empire was dissolved in the German Revolution of 1918–1919, and a democratic government, later known as the Weimar Republic, was created. The interwar period saw strife between supporters of the new republic and hardline opponents on both the right and left. Italy, as an Entente ally, had made some post-war territorial gains; however, Italian nationalists were angered that the promises made by the United Kingdom and France to secure Italian entrance into the war were not fulfilled in the peace settlement. From 1922 to 1925, the Fascist movement led by Benito Mussolini seized power in Italy with a nationalist, totalitarian, and class collaborationist agenda that abolished representative democracy, repressed socialist, left-wing and liberal forces, and pursued an aggressive expansionist foreign policy aimed at making Italy a world power, and promising the creation of a "New Roman Empire".

Adolf Hitler, after an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the German government in 1923, eventually became the Chancellor of Germany in 1933 when Paul Von Hindenburg and the Reichstag appointed him. He abolished democracy, espousing a radical, racially motivated revision of the world order, and soon began a massive rearmament campaign. Meanwhile, France, to secure its alliance, allowed Italy a free hand in Ethiopia, which Italy desired as a colonial possession. The situation was aggravated in early 1935 when the Territory of the Saar Basin was legally reunited with Germany, and Hitler

repudiated the Treaty of Versailles, accelerated his rearmament programme, and introduced conscription.

The United Kingdom, France and Italy formed the Stresa Front in April 1935 in order to contain Germany, a key step towards military globalisation; however, that June, the United Kingdom made an independent naval agreement with Germany, easing prior restrictions. The Soviet Union, concerned by Germany's goals of capturing vast areas of Eastern Europe, drafted a treaty of mutual assistance with France. Before taking effect, though, the Franco-Soviet pact was required to go through the bureaucracy of the League of Nations, which rendered it essentially toothless. The United States, concerned with events in Europe and Asia, passed the Neutrality Act in August of the same year.

Hitler defied the Versailles and Locarno treaties by remilitarising the Rhineland in March 1936, encountering little opposition due to the policy of appeasement. In October 1936, Germany and Italy formed the Rome–Berlin Axis. A month later, Germany and Japan signed the Anti-Comintern Pact, which Italy joined the following year.

## **Asia**

The Kuomintang (KMT) party in China launched a unification campaign against regional warlords and nominally unified China in the mid-1920s, but was soon embroiled in a civil war against its former Chinese Communist Party allies and new regional warlords. In 1931, an increasingly militaristic Empire of Japan, which had long sought influence in China as the first step of what its government saw as the country's right to rule

Asia, staged the Mukden Incident as a pretext to invade Manchuria and establish the puppet state of Manchukuo.

China appealed to the League of Nations to stop the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Japan withdrew from the League of Nations after being condemned for its incursion into Manchuria. The two nations then fought several battles, in Shanghai, Rehe and Hebei, until the Tangu Truce was signed in 1933. Thereafter, Chinese volunteer forces continued the resistance to Japanese aggression in Manchuria, and Chahar and Suiyuan. After the 1936 Xi'an Incident, the Kuomintang and communist forces agreed on a ceasefire to present a united front to oppose Japan.

## **Pre-war events**

### **Italian invasion of Ethiopia (1935)**

The Second Italo-Ethiopian War was a brief colonial war that began in October 1935 and ended in May 1936. The war began with the invasion of the Ethiopian Empire (also known as Abyssinia) by the armed forces of the Kingdom of Italy (*Regnod'Italia*), which was launched from Italian Somaliland and Eritrea. The war resulted in the military occupation of Ethiopia and its annexation into the newly created colony of Italian East Africa (*Africa Orientale Italiana*, or AOI); in addition it exposed the weakness of the League of Nations as a force to preserve peace. Both Italy and Ethiopia were member nations, but the League did little when the former clearly violated Article X of the League's Covenant. The United Kingdom and France supported imposing sanctions on Italy for

the invasion, but the sanctions were not fully enforced and failed to end the Italian invasion. Italy subsequently dropped its objections to Germany's goal of absorbing Austria.

### **Spanish Civil War (1936–1939)**

When civil war broke out in Spain, Hitler and Mussolini lent military support to the Nationalist rebels, led by General Francisco Franco. Italy supported the Nationalists to a greater extent than the Nazis did: altogether Mussolini sent to Spain more than 70,000 ground troops and 6,000 aviation personnel, as well as about 720 aircraft. The Soviet Union supported the existing government of the Spanish Republic. More than 30,000 foreign volunteers, known as the International Brigades, also fought against the Nationalists. Both Germany and the Soviet Union used this proxy war as an opportunity to test in combat their most advanced weapons and tactics. The Nationalists won the civil war in April 1939; Franco, now dictator, remained officially neutral during World War II but generally favoured the Axis. His greatest collaboration with Germany was the sending of volunteers to fight on the Eastern Front.

### **Japanese invasion of China (1937)**

In July 1937, Japan captured the former Chinese imperial capital of Peking after instigating the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which culminated in the Japanese campaign to invade all of China. The Soviets quickly signed a non-aggression pact with China to lend materiel support, effectively ending China's prior co-operation with Germany. From September to November, the Japanese attacked Taiyuan,



engaged the Kuomintang Army around Xinkou, and fought Communist forces in Pingxingguan. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek deployed his best army to defend Shanghai, but after three months of fighting, Shanghai fell. The Japanese continued to push the Chinese forces back, capturing the capital Nanking in December 1937. After the fall of Nanking, tens or hundreds of thousands of Chinese civilians and disarmed combatants were murdered by the Japanese.

In March 1938, Nationalist Chinese forces won their first major victory at Taierzhuang, but then the city of Xuzhou was taken by the Japanese in May. In June 1938, Chinese forces stalled the Japanese advance by flooding the Yellow River; this manoeuvre bought time for the Chinese to prepare their defences at Wuhan, but the city was taken by October. Japanese military victories did not bring about the collapse of Chinese resistance that Japan had hoped to achieve; instead, the Chinese government relocated inland to Chongqing and continued the war.

### **Soviet–Japanese border conflicts**

In the mid-to-late 1930s, Japanese forces in Manchukuo had sporadic border clashes with the Soviet Union and Mongolia. The Japanese doctrine of Hokushin-ron, which emphasised Japan's expansion northward, was favoured by the Imperial Army during this time. With the Japanese defeat at KhalkinGol in 1939, the ongoing Second Sino-Japanese War and ally Nazi Germany pursuing neutrality with the Soviets, this policy would prove difficult to maintain. Japan and the Soviet Union eventually signed a Neutrality Pact in April 1941, and Japan adopted the doctrine of Nanshin-ron, promoted by the Navy,

which took its focus southward, eventually leading to its war with the United States and the Western Allies.

## **European occupations and agreements**

In Europe, Germany and Italy were becoming more aggressive. In March 1938, Germany annexed Austria, again provoking little response from other European powers. Encouraged, Hitler began pressing German claims on the Sudetenland, an area of Czechoslovakia with a predominantly ethnic German population. Soon the United Kingdom and France followed the appeasement policy of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and conceded this territory to Germany in the Munich Agreement, which was made against the wishes of the Czechoslovak government, in exchange for a promise of no further territorial demands. Soon afterwards, Germany and Italy forced Czechoslovakia to cede additional territory to Hungary, and Poland annexed Czechoslovakia's Zaolzie region.

Although all of Germany's stated demands had been satisfied by the agreement, privately Hitler was furious that British interference had prevented him from seizing all of Czechoslovakia in one operation. In subsequent speeches Hitler attacked British and Jewish "war-mongers" and in January 1939 secretly ordered a major build-up of the German navy to challenge British naval supremacy. In March 1939, Germany invaded the remainder of Czechoslovakia and subsequently split it into the German Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and a pro-German client state, the Slovak Republic. Hitler also delivered an ultimatum to Lithuania on 20 March 1939, forcing the concession of the Klaipėda Region, formerly the German *Memelland*.

Greatly alarmed and with Hitler making further demands on the Free City of Danzig, the United Kingdom and France guaranteed their support for Polish independence; when Italy conquered Albania in April 1939, the same guarantee was extended to the Kingdoms of Romania and Greece. Shortly after the Franco-British pledge to Poland, Germany and Italy formalised their own alliance with the Pact of Steel. Hitler accused the United Kingdom and Poland of trying to "encircle" Germany and renounced the Anglo-German Naval Agreement and the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact.

The situation reached a general crisis in late August as German troops continued to mobilise against the Polish border. On 23 August, when tripartite negotiations about a military alliance between France, the United Kingdom and Soviet Union stalled, the Soviet Union signed a non-aggression pact with Germany. This pact had a secret protocol that defined German and Soviet "spheres of influence" (western Poland and Lithuania for Germany; eastern Poland, Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Bessarabia for the Soviet Union), and raised the question of continuing Polish independence. The pact neutralised the possibility of Soviet opposition to a campaign against Poland and assured that Germany would not have to face the prospect of a two-front war, as it had in World War I. Immediately after that, Hitler ordered the attack to proceed on 26 August, but upon hearing that the United Kingdom had concluded a formal mutual assistance pact with Poland and that Italy would maintain neutrality, he decided to delay it.

In response to British requests for direct negotiations to avoid war, Germany made demands on Poland, which only served as a pretext to worsen relations. On 29 August, Hitler demanded

that a Polish plenipotentiary immediately travel to Berlin to negotiate the handover of Danzig, and to allow a plebiscite in the Polish Corridor in which the German minority would vote on secession. The Poles refused to comply with the German demands, and on the night of 30–31 August in a stormy meeting with the British ambassador Neville Henderson, Ribbentrop declared that Germany considered its claims rejected.

## **Course of the war**

### **War breaks out in Europe (1939–40)**

- On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland after having staged several false flag border incidents as a pretext to initiate the invasion. The first German attack of the war came against the Polish defenses at Westerplatte. The United Kingdom responded with an ultimatum to Germany to cease military operations, and on 3 September, after the ultimatum was ignored, France and Britain declared war on Germany, followed by Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada. The alliance provided no direct military support to Poland, outside of a cautious French probe into the Saarland. The Western Allies also began a naval blockade of Germany, which aimed to damage the country's economy and the war effort. Germany responded by ordering U-boat warfare against Allied merchant and warships, which would later escalate into the Battle of the Atlantic.

On 8 September, German troops reached the suburbs of Warsaw. The Polish counter offensive to the west halted the German advance for several days, but it was outflanked and encircled by the *Wehrmacht*. Remnants of the Polish army broke through to besieged Warsaw. On 17 September 1939, after signing a cease-fire with Japan, the Soviet Union invaded Eastern Poland under a pretext that the Polish state had ostensibly ceased to exist. On 27 September, the Warsaw garrison surrendered to the Germans, and the last large operational unit of the Polish Army surrendered on 6 October. Despite the military defeat, Poland never surrendered; instead, it formed the Polish government-in-exile and a clandestine state apparatus remained in occupied Poland. A significant part of Polish military personnel evacuated to Romania and the Baltic countries; many of them later fought against the Axis in other theatres of the war.

Germany annexed the western and occupied the central part of Poland, and the Soviet Union annexed its eastern part; small shares of Polish territory were transferred to Lithuania and Slovakia. On 6 October, Hitler made a public peace overture to the United Kingdom and France but said that the future of Poland was to be determined exclusively by Germany and the Soviet Union. The proposal was rejected, and Hitler ordered an immediate offensive against France, which was postponed until the spring of 1940 due to bad weather.

The Soviet Union forced the Baltic countries—Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were in the Soviet "sphere of influence" under the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact—to sign "mutual assistance pacts" that stipulated stationing Soviet troops in these countries. Soon after, significant Soviet military contingents

were moved there. Finland refused to sign a similar pact and rejected ceding part of its territory to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union invaded Finland in November 1939, and the Soviet Union was expelled from the League of Nations. Despite overwhelming numerical superiority, Soviet military success was modest, and the Finno-Soviet war ended in March 1940 with minimal Finnish concessions.

In June 1940, the Soviet Union forcibly annexed Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and the Romanian regions of Bessarabia, northern Bukovina and Hertza. Meanwhile, Nazi-Soviet political rapprochement and economic co-operation gradually stalled, and both states began preparations for war.

### **Western Europe (1940–41)**

In April 1940, Germany invaded Denmark and Norway to protect shipments of iron ore from Sweden, which the Allies were attempting to cut off. Denmark capitulated after a few hours, and Norway was conquered within two months despite Allied support. British discontent over the Norwegian campaign led to the appointment of Winston Churchill as Prime Minister on 10 May 1940.

On the same day, Germany launched an offensive against France. To circumvent the strong Maginot Line fortifications on the Franco-German border, Germany directed its attack at the neutral nations of Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg. The Germans carried out a flanking manoeuvre through the Ardennes region, which was mistakenly perceived by Allies as an impenetrable natural barrier against armoured vehicles. By successfully implementing new blitzkrieg tactics, the

*Wehrmacht* rapidly advanced to the Channel and cut off the Allied forces in Belgium, trapping the bulk of the Allied armies in a cauldron on the Franco-Belgian border near Lille. The United Kingdom was able to evacuate a significant number of Allied troops from the continent by early June, although abandoning almost all their equipment.

On 10 June, Italy invaded France, declaring war on both France and the United Kingdom. The Germans turned south against the weakened French army, and Paris fell to them on 14 June. Eight days later France signed an armistice with Germany; it was divided into German and Italian occupation zones, and an unoccupied rump state under the Vichy Regime, which, though officially neutral, was generally aligned with Germany. France kept its fleet, which the United Kingdom attacked on 3 July in an attempt to prevent its seizure by Germany.

The air Battle of Britain began in early July with Luftwaffe attacks on shipping and harbours. The United Kingdom rejected Hitler's peace offer, and the German air superiority campaign started in August but failed to defeat RAF Fighter Command, forcing the indefinite postponement of the proposed German invasion of Britain. The German strategic bombing offensive intensified with night attacks on London and other cities in the Blitz, but failed to significantly disrupt the British war effort and largely ended in May 1941.

Using newly captured French ports, the German Navy enjoyed success against an over-extended Royal Navy, using U-boats against British shipping in the Atlantic. The British Home Fleet

scored a significant victory on 27 May 1941 by sinking the German battleship *Bismarck*.

In November 1939, the United States was taking measures to assist China and the Western Allies and amended the Neutrality Act to allow "cash and carry" purchases by the Allies. In 1940, following the German capture of Paris, the size of the United States Navy was significantly increased. In September the United States further agreed to a trade of American destroyers for British bases. Still, a large majority of the American public continued to oppose any direct military intervention in the conflict well into 1941. In December 1940 Roosevelt accused Hitler of planning world conquest and ruled out any negotiations as useless, calling for the United States to become an "arsenal of democracy" and promoting Lend-Lease programmes of aid to support the British war effort. The United States started strategic planning to prepare for a full-scale offensive against Germany. At the end of September 1940, the Tripartite Pact formally united Japan, Italy, and Germany as the Axis powers. The Tripartite Pact stipulated that any country, with the exception of the Soviet Union, which attacked any Axis Power would be forced to go to war against all three. The Axis expanded in November 1940 when Hungary, Slovakia and Romania joined. Romania and Hungary later made major contributions to the Axis war against the Soviet Union, in Romania's case partially to recapture territory ceded to the Soviet Union.

### **Mediterranean (1940–41)**

In early June 1940, the Italian *Regia Aeronautica* attacked and besieged Malta, a British possession. From late summer to



early autumn, Italy conquered British Somaliland and made an incursion into British-held Egypt. In October, Italy attacked Greece, but the attack was repulsed with heavy Italian casualties; the campaign ended within months with minor territorial changes. Germany started preparation for an invasion of the Balkans to assist Italy, to prevent the British from gaining a foothold there, which would be a potential threat for Romanian oil fields, and to strike against the British dominance of the Mediterranean.

In December 1940, British Empire forces began counter-offensives against Italian forces in Egypt and Italian East Africa. The offensives were highly successful; by early February 1941, Italy had lost control of eastern Libya, and large numbers of Italian troops had been taken prisoner. The Italian Navy also suffered significant defeats, with the Royal Navy putting three Italian battleships out of commission by means of a carrier attack at Taranto, and neutralising several more warships at the Battle of Cape Matapan.

Italian defeats prompted Germany to deploy an expeditionary force to North Africa and at the end of March 1941, Rommel's AfrikaKorps launched an offensive which drove back the Commonwealth forces. In under a month, Axis forces advanced to western Egypt and besieged the port of Tobruk.

By late March 1941, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia signed the Tripartite Pact; however, the Yugoslav government was overthrown two days later by pro-British nationalists. Germany responded with simultaneous invasions of both Yugoslavia and Greece, commencing on 6 April 1941; both nations were forced to surrender within the month. The airborne invasion of the

Greek island of Crete at the end of May completed the German conquest of the Balkans. Although the Axis victory was swift, bitter and large-scale partisan warfare subsequently broke out against the Axis occupation of Yugoslavia, which continued until the end of the war.

In the Middle East in May, Commonwealth forces quashed an uprising in Iraq which had been supported by German aircraft from bases within Vichy-controlled Syria. Between June and July, they invaded and occupied the French possessions Syria and Lebanon, with the assistance of the Free French.

### **Axis attack on the Soviet Union (1941)**

With the situation in Europe and Asia relatively stable, Germany, Japan, and the Soviet Union made preparations. With the Soviets wary of mounting tensions with Germany and the Japanese planning to take advantage of the European War by seizing resource-rich European possessions in Southeast Asia, the two powers signed the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact in April 1941. By contrast, the Germans were steadily making preparations for an attack on the Soviet Union, massing forces on the Soviet border.

Hitler believed that the United Kingdom's refusal to end the war was based on the hope that the United States and the Soviet Union would enter the war against Germany sooner or later. He, therefore, decided to try to strengthen Germany's relations with the Soviets or failing that to attack and eliminate them as a factor. In November 1940, negotiations took place to determine if the Soviet Union would join the Tripartite Pact. The Soviets showed some interest but asked for

concessions from Finland, Bulgaria, Turkey, and Japan that Germany considered unacceptable. On 18 December 1940, Hitler issued the directive to prepare for an invasion of the Soviet Union.

On 22 June 1941, Germany, supported by Italy and Romania, invaded the Soviet Union in Operation Barbarossa, with Germany accusing the Soviets of plotting against them. They were joined shortly by Finland and Hungary. The primary targets of this surprise offensive were the Baltic region, Moscow and Ukraine, with the ultimate goal of ending the 1941 campaign near the Arkhangelsk-Astrakhan line, from the Caspian to the White Seas. Hitler's objectives were to eliminate the Soviet Union as a military power, exterminate Communism, generate *Lebensraum* ("living space") by dispossessing the native population and guarantee access to the strategic resources needed to defeat Germany's remaining rivals.

Although the Red Army was preparing for strategic counter-offensives before the war, *Barbarossa* forced the Soviet supreme command to adopt a strategic defence. During the summer, the Axis made significant gains into Soviet territory, inflicting immense losses in both personnel and materiel. By mid-August, however, the German Army High Command decided to suspend the offensive of a considerably depleted Army Group Centre, and to divert the 2nd Panzer Group to reinforce troops advancing towards central Ukraine and Leningrad. The Kiev offensive was overwhelmingly successful, resulting in encirclement and elimination of four Soviet armies, and made possible further advance into Crimea and industrially developed Eastern Ukraine (the First Battle of Kharkov).

The diversion of three quarters of the Axis troops and the majority of their air forces from France and the central Mediterranean to the Eastern Front prompted the United Kingdom to reconsider its grand strategy. In July, the UK and the Soviet Union formed a military alliance against Germany and in August, the United Kingdom and the United States jointly issued the Atlantic Charter, which outlined British and American goals for the postwar world. In late August the British and Soviets invaded neutral Iran to secure the Persian Corridor, Iran's oil fields, and preempt any Axis advances through Iran toward the Baku oil fields or British India.

By October Axis operational objectives in Ukraine and the Baltic region were achieved, with only the sieges of Leningrad and Sevastopol continuing. A major offensive against Moscow was renewed; after two months of fierce battles in increasingly harsh weather, the German army almost reached the outer suburbs of Moscow, where the exhausted troops were forced to suspend their offensive. Large territorial gains were made by Axis forces, but their campaign had failed to achieve its main objectives: two key cities remained in Soviet hands, the Soviet capability to resist was not broken, and the Soviet Union retained a considerable part of its military potential. The *blitzkrieg* phase of the war in Europe had ended.

By early December, freshly mobilised reserves allowed the Soviets to achieve numerical parity with Axis troops. This, as well as intelligence data which established that a minimal number of Soviet troops in the East would be sufficient to deter any attack by the Japanese Kwantung Army, allowed the Soviets to begin a massive counter-offensive that started on 5

December all along the front and pushed German troops 100–250 kilometres (62–155 mi) west.

### **War breaks out in the Pacific (1941)**

- Following the Japanese false flag Mukden Incident in 1931, the Japanese shelling of the American gunboat *USS Panay* in 1937, and the 1937-38 Nanjing Massacre, Japanese-American relations deteriorated. In 1939, the United States notified Japan that it would not be extending its trade treaty and American public opinion opposing Japanese expansionism led to a series of economic sanctions, the Export Control Acts, which banned U.S. exports of chemicals, minerals and military parts to Japan and increased economic pressure on the Japanese regime. During 1939 Japan launched its first attack against Changsha, a strategically important Chinese city, but was repulsed by late September. Despite several offensives by both sides, the war between China and Japan was stalemated by 1940. To increase pressure on China by blocking supply routes, and to better position Japanese forces in the event of a war with the Western powers, Japan invaded and occupied northern Indochina in September 1940.

Chinese nationalist forces launched a large-scale counter-offensive in early 1940. In August, Chinese communists launched an offensive in Central China; in retaliation, Japan instituted harsh measures in occupied areas to reduce human and material resources for the communists. The continued antipathy between Chinese communist and nationalist forces

culminated in armed clashes in January 1941, effectively ending their co-operation. In March, the Japanese 11th army attacked the headquarters of the Chinese 19th army but was repulsed during Battle of Shanggao. In September, Japan attempted to take the city of Changsha again and clashed with Chinese nationalist forces.

German successes in Europe encouraged Japan to increase pressure on European governments in Southeast Asia. The Dutch government agreed to provide Japan with some oil supplies from the Dutch East Indies, but negotiations for additional access to their resources ended in failure in June 1941. In July 1941 Japan sent troops to southern Indochina, thus threatening British and Dutch possessions in the Far East. The United States, the United Kingdom, and other Western governments reacted to this move with a freeze on Japanese assets and a total oil embargo. At the same time, Japan was planning an invasion of the Soviet Far East, intending to capitalise off the German invasion in the west, but abandoned the operation after the sanctions.

Since early 1941 the United States and Japan had been engaged in negotiations in an attempt to improve their strained relations and end the war in China. During these negotiations, Japan advanced a number of proposals which were dismissed by the Americans as inadequate. At the same time the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands engaged in secret discussions for the joint defence of their territories, in the event of a Japanese attack against any of them. Roosevelt reinforced the Philippines (an American protectorate scheduled for independence in 1946) and warned Japan that the United

States would react to Japanese attacks against any "neighboring countries".

Frustrated at the lack of progress and feeling the pinch of the American–British–Dutch sanctions, Japan prepared for war. On 20 November, a new government under Hideki Tojo presented an interim proposal as its final offer. It called for the end of American aid to China and for lifting the embargo on the supply of oil and other resources to Japan. In exchange, Japan promised not to launch any attacks in Southeast Asia and to withdraw its forces from southern Indochina. The American counter-proposal of 26 November required that Japan evacuate all of China without conditions and conclude non-aggression pacts with all Pacific powers. That meant Japan was essentially forced to choose between abandoning its ambitions in China, or seizing the natural resources it needed in the Dutch East Indies by force; the Japanese military did not consider the former an option, and many officers considered the oil embargo an unspoken declaration of war.

Japan planned to rapidly seize European colonies in Asia to create a large defensive perimeter stretching into the Central Pacific. The Japanese would then be free to exploit the resources of Southeast Asia while exhausting the overstretched Allies by fighting a defensive war. To prevent American intervention while securing the perimeter, it was further planned to neutralise the United States Pacific Fleet and the American military presence in the Philippines from the outset. On 7 December 1941 (8 December in Asian time zones), Japan attacked British and American holdings with near-simultaneous offensives against Southeast Asia and the Central Pacific. These included an attack on the American

fleets at Pearl Harbor and the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island, landings in Malaya, Thailand and the Battle of Hong Kong.

The Japanese invasion of Thailand led to Thailand's decision to ally itself with Japan and the other Japanese attacks led the United States, United Kingdom, China, Australia, and several other states to formally declare war on Japan, whereas the Soviet Union, being heavily involved in large-scale hostilities with European Axis countries, maintained its neutrality agreement with Japan. Germany, followed by the other Axis states, declared war on the United States in solidarity with Japan, citing as justification the American attacks on German war vessels that had been ordered by Roosevelt.

### **Axis advance stalls (1942–43)**

On 1 January 1942, the Allied Big Four—the Soviet Union, China, the United Kingdom and the United States—and 22 smaller or exiled governments issued the Declaration by United Nations, thereby affirming the Atlantic Charter, and agreeing not to sign a separate peace with the Axis powers.

During 1942, Allied officials debated on the appropriate grand strategy to pursue. All agreed that defeating Germany was the primary objective. The Americans favoured a straightforward, large-scale attack on Germany through France. The Soviets were also demanding a second front. The British, on the other hand, argued that military operations should target peripheral areas to wear out German strength, leading to increasing demoralisation, and bolster resistance forces. Germany itself would be subject to a heavy bombing campaign. An offensive against Germany would then be launched primarily by Allied



armour without using large-scale armies. Eventually, the British persuaded the Americans that a landing in France was infeasible in 1942 and they should instead focus on driving the Axis out of North Africa.

At the Casablanca Conference in early 1943, the Allies reiterated the statements issued in the 1942 Declaration and demanded the unconditional surrender of their enemies. The British and Americans agreed to continue to press the initiative in the Mediterranean by invading Sicily to fully secure the Mediterranean supply routes. Although the British argued for further operations in the Balkans to bring Turkey into the war, in May 1943, the Americans extracted a British commitment to limit Allied operations in the Mediterranean to an invasion of the Italian mainland and to invade France in 1944.

### **Pacific (1942–43)**

By the end of April 1942, Japan and its ally Thailand had almost fully conquered Burma, Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, and Rabaul, inflicting severe losses on Allied troops and taking a large number of prisoners. Despite stubborn resistance by Filipino and US forces, the Philippine Commonwealth was eventually captured in May 1942, forcing its government into exile. On 16 April, in Burma, 7,000 British soldiers were encircled by the Japanese 33rd Division during the Battle of Yenangyaung and rescued by the Chinese 38th Division. Japanese forces also achieved naval victories in the South China Sea, Java Sea and Indian Ocean, and bombed the Allied naval base at Darwin, Australia. In January 1942, the only Allied success against Japan was a Chinese victory at

Changsha. These easy victories over the unprepared US and European opponents left Japan overconfident, as well as overextended.

In early May 1942, Japan initiated operations to capture Port Moresby by amphibious assault and thus sever communications and supply lines between the United States and Australia. The planned invasion was thwarted when an Allied task force, centred on two American fleet carriers, fought Japanese naval forces to a draw in the Battle of the Coral Sea. Japan's next plan, motivated by the earlier Doolittle Raid, was to seize Midway Atoll and lure American carriers into battle to be eliminated; as a diversion, Japan would also send forces to occupy the Aleutian Islands in Alaska. In mid-May, Japan started the Zhejiang-Jiangxi campaign in China, with the goal of inflicting retribution on the Chinese who aided the surviving American airmen in the Doolittle Raid by destroying Chinese air bases and fighting against the Chinese 23rd and 32nd Army Groups. In early June, Japan put its operations into action, but the Americans, having broken Japanese naval codes in late May, were fully aware of the plans and order of battle, and used this knowledge to achieve a decisive victory at Midway over the Imperial Japanese Navy.

With its capacity for aggressive action greatly diminished as a result of the Midway battle, Japan chose to focus on a belated attempt to capture Port Moresby by an overland campaign in the Territory of Papua. The Americans planned a counter-attack against Japanese positions in the southern Solomon Islands, primarily Guadalcanal, as a first step towards capturing Rabaul, the main Japanese base in Southeast Asia.

Both plans started in July, but by mid-September, the Battle for Guadalcanal took priority for the Japanese, and troops in New Guinea were ordered to withdraw from the Port Moresby area to the northern part of the island, where they faced Australian and United States troops in the Battle of Buna-Gona. Guadalcanal soon became a focal point for both sides with heavy commitments of troops and ships in the battle for Guadalcanal. By the start of 1943, the Japanese were defeated on the island and withdrew their troops. In Burma, Commonwealth forces mounted two operations. The first, an offensive into the Arakan region in late 1942, went disastrously, forcing a retreat back to India by May 1943. The second was the insertion of irregular forces behind Japanese front-lines in February which, by the end of April, had achieved mixed results.

### **Eastern Front (1942–43)**

Despite considerable losses, in early 1942 Germany and its allies stopped a major Soviet offensive in central and southern Russia, keeping most territorial gains they had achieved during the previous year. In May the Germans defeated Soviet offensives in the Kerch Peninsula and at Kharkov, and then launched their main summer offensive against southern Russia in June 1942, to seize the oil fields of the Caucasus and occupy the Kuban steppe, while maintaining positions on the northern and central areas of the front. The Germans split Army Group South into two groups: Army Group A advanced to the lower Don River and struck south-east to the Caucasus, while Army Group B headed towards the Volga River. The Soviets decided to make their stand at Stalingrad on the Volga.

By mid-November, the Germans had nearly taken Stalingrad in bitter street fighting. The Soviets began their second winter counter-offensive, starting with an encirclement of German forces at Stalingrad, and an assault on the Rzhev salient near Moscow, though the latter failed disastrously. By early February 1943, the German Army had taken tremendous losses; German troops at Stalingrad had been defeated, and the front-line had been pushed back beyond its position before the summer offensive. In mid-February, after the Soviet push had tapered off, the Germans launched another attack on Kharkov, creating a salient in their front line around the Soviet city of Kursk.

### **Western Europe/Atlantic and Mediterranean (1942–43)**

Exploiting poor American naval command decisions, the German navy ravaged Allied shipping off the American Atlantic coast. By November 1941, Commonwealth forces had launched a counter-offensive, Operation Crusader, in North Africa, and reclaimed all the gains the Germans and Italians had made. In North Africa, the Germans launched an offensive in January, pushing the British back to positions at the Gazala line by early February, followed by a temporary lull in combat which Germany used to prepare for their upcoming offensives. Concerns the Japanese might use bases in Vichy-held Madagascar caused the British to invade the island in early May 1942. An Axis offensive in Libya forced an Allied retreat deep inside Egypt until Axis forces were stopped at El Alamein. On the Continent, raids of Allied commandos on strategic targets, culminating in the disastrous Dieppe Raid, demonstrated the Western Allies' inability to launch an

invasion of continental Europe without much better preparation, equipment, and operational security.

In August 1942, the Allies succeeded in repelling a second attack against El Alamein and, at a high cost, managed to deliver desperately needed supplies to the besieged Malta. A few months later, the Allies commenced an attack of their own in Egypt, dislodging the Axis forces and beginning a drive west across Libya. This attack was followed up shortly after by Anglo-American landings in French North Africa, which resulted in the region joining the Allies. Hitler responded to the French colony's defection by ordering the occupation of Vichy France; although Vichy forces did not resist this violation of the armistice, they managed to scuttle their fleet to prevent its capture by German forces. The Axis forces in Africa withdrew into Tunisia, which was conquered by the Allies in May 1943.

In June 1943 the British and Americans began a strategic bombing campaign against Germany with a goal to disrupt the war economy, reduce morale, and "de-house" the civilian population. The firebombing of Hamburg was among the first attacks in this campaign, inflicting significant casualties and considerable losses on infrastructure of this important industrial centre.

### **Allies gain momentum (1943–44)**

After the Guadalcanal Campaign, the Allies initiated several operations against Japan in the Pacific. In May 1943, Canadian and US forces were sent to eliminate Japanese forces from the Aleutians. Soon after, the United States, with support

from Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Islander forces, began major ground, sea and air operations to isolate Rabaul by capturing surrounding islands, and breach the Japanese Central Pacific perimeter at the Gilbert and Marshall Islands. By the end of March 1944, the Allies had completed both of these objectives and had also neutralised the major Japanese base at Truk in the Caroline Islands. In April, the Allies launched an operation to retake Western New Guinea.

In the Soviet Union, both the Germans and the Soviets spent the spring and early summer of 1943 preparing for large offensives in central Russia. On 4 July 1943, Germany attacked Soviet forces around the Kursk Bulge. Within a week, German forces had exhausted themselves against the Soviets' deeply echeloned and well-constructed defences, and for the first time in the war Hitler cancelled the operation before it had achieved tactical or operational success. This decision was partially affected by the Western Allies' invasion of Sicily launched on 9 July, which, combined with previous Italian failures, resulted in the ousting and arrest of Mussolini later that month.

On 12 July 1943, the Soviets launched their own counter-offensives, thereby dispelling any chance of German victory or even stalemate in the east. The Soviet victory at Kursk marked the end of German superiority, giving the Soviet Union the initiative on the Eastern Front. The Germans tried to stabilise their eastern front along the hastily fortified Panther–Wotan line, but the Soviets broke through it at Smolensk and by the Lower Dnieper Offensive.

On 3 September 1943, the Western Allies invaded the Italian mainland, following Italy's armistice with the Allies. Germany with the help of fascists responded by disarming Italian forces that were in many places without superior orders, seizing military control of Italian areas, and creating a series of defensive lines. German special forces then rescued Mussolini, who then soon established a new client state in German-occupied Italy named the Italian Social Republic, causing an Italian civil war. The Western Allies fought through several lines until reaching the main German defensive line in mid-November.

German operations in the Atlantic also suffered. By May 1943, as Allied counter-measures became increasingly effective, the resulting sizeable German submarine losses forced a temporary halt of the German Atlantic naval campaign. In November 1943, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Winston Churchill met with Chiang Kai-shek in Cairo and then with Joseph Stalin in Tehran. The former conference determined the post-war return of Japanese territory and the military planning for the Burma campaign, while the latter included agreement that the Western Allies would invade Europe in 1944 and that the Soviet Union would declare war on Japan within three months of Germany's defeat.

From November 1943, during the seven-week Battle of Changde, the Chinese forced Japan to fight a costly war of attrition, while awaiting Allied relief. In January 1944, the Allies launched a series of attacks in Italy against the line at Monte Cassino and tried to outflank it with landings at Anzio. On 27 January 1944, Soviet troops launched a major offensive that expelled German forces from the Leningrad region, thereby

ending the most lethal siege in history. The following Soviet offensive was halted on the pre-war Estonian border by the German Army Group North aided by Estonians hoping to re-establish national independence. This delay slowed subsequent Soviet operations in the Baltic Sea region. By late May 1944, the Soviets had liberated Crimea, largely expelled Axis forces from Ukraine, and made incursions into Romania, which were repulsed by the Axis troops. The Allied offensives in Italy had succeeded and, at the expense of allowing several German divisions to retreat, on 4 June Rome was captured.

The Allies had mixed success in mainland Asia. In March 1944, the Japanese launched the first of two invasions, an operation against British positions in Assam, India, and soon besieged Commonwealth positions at Imphal and Kohima. In May 1944, British forces mounted a counter-offensive that drove Japanese troops back to Burma by July, and Chinese forces that had invaded northern Burma in late 1943 besieged Japanese troops in Myitkyina. The second Japanese invasion of China aimed to destroy China's main fighting forces, secure railways between Japanese-held territory and capture Allied airfields. By June, the Japanese had conquered the province of Henan and begun a new attack on Changsha.

### **Allies close in (1944)**

- On 6 June 1944 (known as D-Day), after three years of Soviet pressure, the Western Allies invaded northern France. After reassigning several Allied divisions from Italy, they also attacked southern France. These landings were successful and led to the defeat of the German Army units in France. Paris



was liberated on 25 August by the local resistance assisted by the Free French Forces, both led by General Charles de Gaulle, and the Western Allies continued to push back German forces in western Europe during the latter part of the year. An attempt to advance into northern Germany spearheaded by a major airborne operation in the Netherlands failed. After that, the Western Allies slowly pushed into Germany, but failed to cross the Rurriver in a large offensive. In Italy, Allied advance also slowed due to the last major German defensive line.

On 22 June, the Soviets launched a strategic offensive in Belarus ("Operation Bagration") that destroyed the German Army Group Centre almost completely. Soon after that, another Soviet strategic offensive forced German troops from Western Ukraine and Eastern Poland. The Soviets formed the Polish Committee of National Liberation to control territory in Poland and combat the Polish ArmiaKrajowa; The Soviet Red Army remained in the Praga district on the other side of the Vistula and watched passively as the Germans quelled the Warsaw Uprising initiated by the ArmiaKrajowa. The national uprising in Slovakia was also quelled by the Germans. The Soviet Red Army's strategic offensive in eastern Romania cut off and destroyed the considerable German troops there and triggered a successful coup d'état in Romania and in Bulgaria, followed by those countries' shift to the Allied side.

In September 1944, Soviet troops advanced into Yugoslavia and forced the rapid withdrawal of German Army Groups E and F in Greece, Albania and Yugoslavia to rescue them from being cut off. By this point, the Communist-led Partisans under Marshal

Josip Broz Tito, who had led an increasingly successful guerrilla campaign against the occupation since 1941, controlled much of the territory of Yugoslavia and engaged in delaying efforts against German forces further south. In northern Serbia, the Soviet Red Army, with limited support from Bulgarian forces, assisted the Partisans in a joint liberation of the capital city of Belgrade on 20 October. A few days later, the Soviets launched a massive assault against German-occupied Hungary that lasted until the fall of Budapest in February 1945. Unlike impressive Soviet victories in the Balkans, bitter Finnish resistance to the Soviet offensive in the Karelian Isthmus denied the Soviets occupation of Finland and led to a Soviet-Finnish armistice on relatively mild conditions, although Finland was forced to fight their former ally Germany.

By the start of July 1944, Commonwealth forces in Southeast Asia had repelled the Japanese sieges in Assam, pushing the Japanese back to the Chindwin River while the Chinese captured Myitkyina. In September 1944, Chinese forces captured Mount Song and reopened the Burma Road. In China, the Japanese had more successes, having finally captured Changsha in mid-June and the city of Hengyang by early August. Soon after, they invaded the province of Guangxi, winning major engagements against Chinese forces at Guilin and Liuzhou by the end of November and successfully linking up their forces in China and Indochina by mid-December.

In the Pacific, US forces continued to press back the Japanese perimeter. In mid-June 1944, they began their offensive against the Mariana and Palau islands and decisively defeated Japanese forces in the Battle of the Philippine Sea. These

defeats led to the resignation of the Japanese Prime Minister, Hideki Tojo, and provided the United States with air bases to launch intensive heavy bomber attacks on the Japanese home islands. In late October, American forces invaded the Filipino island of Leyte; soon after, Allied naval forces scored another large victory in the Battle of Leyte Gulf, one of the largest naval battles in history.

### **Axis collapse, Allied victory (1944–45)**

On 16 December 1944, Germany made a last attempt on the Western Front by using most of its remaining reserves to launch a massive counter-offensive in the Ardennes and along with the French-German border to split the Western Allies, encircle large portions of Western Allied troops and capture their primary supply port at Antwerp to prompt a political settlement. By January, the offensive had been repulsed with no strategic objectives fulfilled. In Italy, the Western Allies remained stalemated at the German defensive line. In mid-January 1945, the Soviets and Poles attacked in Poland, pushing from the Vistula to the Oder river in Germany, and overran East Prussia. On 4 February Soviet, British, and US leaders met for the Yalta Conference. They agreed on the occupation of post-war Germany, and on when the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan.

In February, the Soviets entered Silesia and Pomerania, while Western Allies entered western Germany and closed to the Rhine river. By March, the Western Allies crossed the Rhine north and south of the Ruhr, encircling the German Army Group B. In early March, in an attempt to protect its last oil reserves in Hungary and to retake Budapest, Germany

launched its last major offensive against Soviet troops near Lake Balaton. In two weeks, the offensive had been repulsed, the Soviets advanced to Vienna, and captured the city. In early April, Soviet troops captured Königsberg, while the Western Allies finally pushed forward in Italy and swept across western Germany capturing Hamburg and Nuremberg. American and Soviet forces met at the Elbe river on 25 April, leaving several unoccupied pockets in southern Germany and around Berlin.

Soviet and Polish forces stormed and captured Berlin in late April. In Italy, German forces surrendered on 29 April. On 30 April, the Reichstag was captured, signalling the military defeat of Nazi Germany, Berlin garrison surrendered on 2 May.

Several changes in leadership occurred during this period. On 12 April, President Roosevelt died and was succeeded by Harry S. Truman. Benito Mussolini was killed by Italian partisans on 28 April. Two days later, Hitler committed suicide in besieged Berlin, and he was succeeded by Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz. Total and unconditional surrender in Europe was signed on 7 and 8 May, to be effective by the end of 8 May. German Army Group Centre resisted in Prague until 11 May.

In the Pacific theatre, American forces accompanied by the forces of the Philippine Commonwealth advanced in the Philippines, clearing Leyte by the end of April 1945. They landed on Luzon in January 1945 and recaptured Manila in March. Fighting continued on Luzon, Mindanao, and other islands of the Philippines until the end of the war. Meanwhile, the United States Army Air Forces launched a massive firebombing campaign of strategic cities in Japan in an effort to destroy Japanese war industry and civilian morale. A

devastating bombing raid on Tokyo of 9–10 March was the deadliest conventional bombing raid in history.

In May 1945, Australian troops landed in Borneo, overrunning the oilfields there. British, American, and Chinese forces defeated the Japanese in northern Burma in March, and the British pushed on to reach Rangoon by 3 May. Chinese forces started a counterattack in the Battle of West Hunan that occurred between 6 April and 7 June 1945. American naval and amphibious forces also moved towards Japan, taking Iwo Jima by March, and Okinawa by the end of June. At the same time, American submarines cut off Japanese imports, drastically reducing Japan's ability to supply its overseas forces.

On 11 July, Allied leaders met in Potsdam, Germany. They confirmed earlier agreements about Germany, and the American, British and Chinese governments reiterated the demand for unconditional surrender of Japan, specifically stating that "the alternative for Japan is prompt and utter destruction". During this conference, the United Kingdom held its general election, and Clement Attlee replaced Churchill as Prime Minister.

The call for unconditional surrender was rejected by the Japanese government, which believed it would be capable of negotiating for more favourable surrender terms. In early August, the United States dropped atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Between the two bombings, the Soviets, pursuant to the Yalta agreement, invaded Japanese-held Manchuria and quickly defeated the Kwantung Army, which was the largest Japanese fighting force.

These two events persuaded previously adamant Imperial Army leaders to accept surrender terms. The Red Army also captured the southern part of Sakhalin Island and the Kuril Islands. On 15 August 1945, Japan surrendered, with the surrender documents finally signed at Tokyo Bay on the deck of the American battleship USS *Missouri* on 2 September 1945, ending the war.

## **Aftermath**

The Allies established occupation administrations in Austria and Germany. The former became a neutral state, non-aligned with any political bloc. The latter was divided into western and eastern occupation zones controlled by the Western Allies and the Soviet Union. A denazification programme in Germany led to the prosecution of Nazi war criminals in the Nuremberg trials and the removal of ex-Nazis from power, although this policy moved towards amnesty and re-integration of ex-Nazis into West German society.

Germany lost a quarter of its pre-war (1937) territory. Among the eastern territories, Silesia, Neumark and most of Pomerania were taken over by Poland, and East Prussia was divided between Poland and the Soviet Union, followed by the expulsion to Germany of the nine million Germans from these provinces, as well as three million Germans from the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia. By the 1950s, one-fifth of West Germans were refugees from the east. The Soviet Union also took over the Polish provinces east of the Curzon line, from which 2 million Poles were expelled; north-east Romania, parts of eastern Finland, and the three Baltic states were incorporated into the Soviet Union.

- In an effort to maintain world peace, the Allies formed the United Nations, which officially came into existence on 24 October 1945, and adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 as a common standard for all member nations. The great powers that were the victors of the war—France, China, the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union and the United States—became the permanent members of the UN's Security Council. The five permanent members remain so to the present, although there have been two seat changes, between the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China in 1971, and between the Soviet Union and its successor state, the Russian Federation, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The alliance between the Western Allies and the Soviet Union had begun to deteriorate even before the war was over.

Germany had been *de facto* divided, and two independent states, the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), were created within the borders of Allied and Soviet occupation zones. The rest of Europe was also divided into Western and Soviet spheres of influence. Most eastern and central European countries fell into the Soviet sphere, which led to establishment of Communist-led regimes, with full or partial support of the Soviet occupation authorities. As a result, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Albania became Soviet satellite states. Communist Yugoslavia conducted a fully independent policy, causing tension with the Soviet Union.

Post-war division of the world was formalised by two international military alliances, the United States-led NATO and the Soviet-led Warsaw Pact. The long period of political tensions and military competition between them, the Cold War, would be accompanied by an unprecedented arms race and number of proxy wars throughout the world.

In Asia, the United States led the occupation of Japan and administered Japan's former islands in the Western Pacific, while the Soviets annexed South Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands. Korea, formerly under Japanese rule, was divided and occupied by the Soviet Union in the North and the United States in the South between 1945 and 1948. Separate republics emerged on both sides of the 38th parallel in 1948, each claiming to be the legitimate government for all of Korea, which led ultimately to the Korean War.

In China, nationalist and communist forces resumed the civil war in June 1946. Communist forces were victorious and established the People's Republic of China on the mainland, while nationalist forces retreated to Taiwan in 1949. In the Middle East, the Arab rejection of the United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine and the creation of Israel marked the escalation of the Arab–Israeli conflict. While European powers attempted to retain some or all of their colonial empires, their losses of prestige and resources during the war rendered this unsuccessful, leading to decolonisation.

The global economy suffered heavily from the war, although participating nations were affected differently. The United States emerged much richer than any other nation, leading to a baby boom, and by 1950 its gross domestic product per person



was much higher than that of any of the other powers, and it dominated the world economy. The UK and US pursued a policy of industrial disarmament in Western Germany in the years 1945–1948. Because of international trade interdependencies this led to European economic stagnation and delayed European recovery for several years.

Recovery began with the mid-1948 currency reform in Western Germany, and was sped up by the liberalisation of European economic policy that the Marshall Plan (1948–1951) both directly and indirectly caused. The post-1948 West German recovery has been called the German economic miracle. Italy also experienced an economic boom and the French economy rebounded. By contrast, the United Kingdom was in a state of economic ruin, and although receiving a quarter of the total Marshall Plan assistance, more than any other European country, it continued in relative economic decline for decades.

The Soviet Union, despite enormous human and material losses, also experienced rapid increase in production in the immediate post-war era. Japan recovered much later. China returned to its pre-war industrial production by 1952.

## **Impact**

### **Casualties and war crimes**

Estimates for the total number of casualties in the war vary, because many deaths went unrecorded. Most suggest that some 60 million people died in the war, including about 20 million military personnel and 40 million civilians. Many of the

civilians died because of deliberate genocide, massacres, mass bombings, disease, and starvation.

The Soviet Union alone lost around 27 million people during the war, including 8.7 million military and 19 million civilian deaths. A quarter of the total people in the Soviet Union were wounded or killed. Germany sustained 5.3 million military losses, mostly on the Eastern Front and during the final battles in Germany.

An estimated 11 to 17 million civilians died as a direct or as an indirect result of Nazi racist policies, including mass killing of around 6 million Jews, along with Roma, homosexuals, at least 1.9 million ethnic Poles and millions of other Slavs (including Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians), and other ethnic and minority groups. Between 1941 and 1945, more than 200,000 ethnic Serbs, along with gypsies and Jews, were persecuted and murdered by the Axis-aligned Croatian Ustaše in Yugoslavia. Also, more than 100,000 Poles were massacred by the Ukrainian Insurgent Army in the Volhynia massacres, between 1943 and 1945. At the same time, about 10,000–15,000 Ukrainians were killed by the Polish Home Army and other Polish units, in reprisal attacks.

In Asia and the Pacific, between 3 million and more than 10 million civilians, mostly Chinese (estimated at 7.5 million), were killed by the Japanese occupation forces. The most infamous Japanese atrocity was the Nanking Massacre, in which fifty to three hundred thousand Chinese civilians were raped and murdered. Mitsuyoshi Himeta reported that 2.7 million casualties occurred during the *Sankō Sakusen*. General Yasuji Okamura implemented the policy in Heipei and

Shantung. Axis forces employed biological and chemical weapons. The Imperial Japanese Army used a variety of such weapons during its invasion and occupation of China (*see Unit 731*) and in early conflicts against the Soviets. Both the Germans and the Japanese tested such weapons against civilians, and sometimes on prisoners of war.

The Soviet Union was responsible for the Katyn massacre of 22,000 Polish officers, and the imprisonment or execution of thousands of political prisoners by the NKVD, along with mass civilian deportations to Siberia, in the Baltic states and eastern Poland annexed by the Red Army.

The mass bombing of cities in Europe and Asia has often been called a war crime, although no positive or specific customary international humanitarian law with respect to aerial warfare existed before or during World War II. The USAAF firebombed a total of 67 Japanese cities, killing 393,000 civilians and destroying 65% of built-up areas.

### **Genocide, concentration camps, and slave labour**

Nazi Germany was responsible for the Holocaust (which killed approximately 6 million Jews) as well as for killing 2.7 million ethnic Poles and 4 million others who were deemed "unworthy of life" (including the disabled and mentally ill, Soviet prisoners of war, Romani, homosexuals, Freemasons, and Jehovah's Witnesses) as part of a programme of deliberate extermination, in effect becoming a "genocidal state". Soviet POWs were kept in especially unbearable conditions, and 3.6 million Soviet POWs out of 5.7 million died in Nazi camps during the war. In addition to concentration camps, death

camps were created in Nazi Germany to exterminate people on an industrial scale. Nazi Germany extensively used forced labourers; about 12 million Europeans from German-occupied countries were abducted and used as a slave work force in German industry, agriculture and war economy.

The Soviet Gulag became a *de facto* system of deadly camps during 1942–43, when wartime privation and hunger caused numerous deaths of inmates, including foreign citizens of Poland and other countries occupied in 1939–40 by the Soviet Union, as well as Axis POWs. By the end of the war, most Soviet POWs liberated from Nazi camps and many repatriated civilians were detained in special filtration camps where they were subjected to NKVD evaluation, and 226,127 were sent to the Gulag as real or perceived Nazi collaborators.

Japanese prisoner-of-war camps, many of which were used as labour camps, also had high death rates. The International Military Tribunal for the Far East found the death rate of Western prisoners was 27 per cent (for American POWs, 37 per cent), seven times that of POWs under the Germans and Italians. While 37,583 prisoners from the UK, 28,500 from the Netherlands, and 14,473 from the United States were released after the surrender of Japan, the number of Chinese released was only 56.

At least five million Chinese civilians from northern China and Manchukuo were enslaved between 1935 and 1941 by the East Asia Development Board, or *Kōain*, for work in mines and war industries. After 1942, the number reached 10 million. In Java, between 4 and 10 million *rōmusha* (Japanese: "manual labourers"), were forced to work by the Japanese military.

About 270,000 of these Javanese labourers were sent to other Japanese-held areas in South East Asia, and only 52,000 were repatriated to Java.

## **Occupation**

- In Europe, occupation came under two forms. In Western, Northern, and Central Europe (France, Norway, Denmark, the Low Countries, and the annexed portions of Czechoslovakia) Germany established economic policies through which it collected roughly 69.5 billion reichsmarks (27.8 billion US dollars) by the end of the war; this figure does not include the sizeable plunder of industrial products, military equipment, raw materials and other goods. Thus, the income from occupied nations was over 40 percent of the income Germany collected from taxation, a figure which increased to nearly 40 percent of total German income as the war went on.

In the East, the intended gains of *Lebensraum* were never attained as fluctuating front-lines and Soviet scorched earth policies denied resources to the German invaders. Unlike in the West, the Nazi racial policy encouraged extreme brutality against what it considered to be the "inferior people" of Slavic descent; most German advances were thus followed by mass executions. Although resistance groups formed in most occupied territories, they did not significantly hamper German operations in either the East or the West until late 1943.

In Asia, Japan termed nations under its occupation as being part of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, essentially a Japanese hegemony which it claimed was for purposes of liberating colonised peoples. Although Japanese forces were sometimes welcomed as liberators from European domination, Japanese war crimes frequently turned local public opinion against them. During Japan's initial conquest, it captured 4,000,000 barrels (640,000 m) of oil ( $\sim 5.5 \times 10$  tonnes) left behind by retreating Allied forces; and by 1943, was able to get production in the Dutch East Indies up to 50 million barrels ( $\sim 6.8 \times 10$  t), 76 per cent of its 1940 output rate.

### **Home fronts and production**

In Europe, before the outbreak of the war, the Allies had significant advantages in both population and economics. In 1938, the Western Allies (United Kingdom, France, Poland and the British Dominions) had a 30 percent larger population and a 30 percent higher gross domestic product than the European Axis powers (Germany and Italy); if colonies are included, the Allies had more than a 5:1 advantage in population and a nearly 2:1 advantage in GDP. In Asia at the same time, China had roughly six times the population of Japan but only an 89 percent higher GDP; this is reduced to three times the population and only a 38 percent higher GDP if Japanese colonies are included.

The United States produced about two-thirds of all the munitions used by the Allies in WWII, including warships, transports, warplanes, artillery, tanks, trucks, and ammunition. Though the Allies' economic and population advantages were largely mitigated during the initial rapid

blitzkrieg attacks of Germany and Japan, they became the decisive factor by 1942, after the United States and Soviet Union joined the Allies, as the war largely settled into one of attrition. While the Allies' ability to out-produce the Axis is often attributed to the Allies having more access to natural resources, other factors, such as Germany and Japan's reluctance to employ women in the labour force,

Allied strategic bombing, and Germany's late shift to a war economy contributed significantly. Additionally, neither Germany nor Japan planned to fight a protracted war, and had not equipped themselves to do so. To improve their production, Germany and Japan used millions of slave labourers; Germany used about 12 million people, mostly from Eastern Europe, while Japan used more than 18 million people in Far East Asia.

### **Advances in technology and warfare**

Aircraft were used for reconnaissance, as fighters, bombers, and ground-support, and each role was advanced considerably. Innovation included airlift (the capability to quickly move limited high-priority supplies, equipment, and personnel); and of strategic bombing (the bombing of enemy industrial and population centres to destroy the enemy's ability to wage war). Anti-aircraft weaponry also advanced, including defences such as radar and surface-to-air artillery. The use of the jet aircraft was pioneered and, though late introduction meant it had little impact, it led to jets becoming standard in air forces worldwide. Although guided missiles were being developed, they were not advanced enough to reliably target aircraft until some years after the war.

Advances were made in nearly every aspect of naval warfare, most notably with aircraft carriers and submarines. Although aeronautical warfare had relatively little success at the start of the war, actions at Taranto, Pearl Harbor, and the Coral Sea established the carrier as the dominant capital ship in place of the battleship. In the Atlantic, escort carriers proved to be a vital part of Allied convoys, increasing the effective protection radius and helping to close the Mid-Atlantic gap. Carriers were also more economical than battleships because of the relatively low cost of aircraft and their not requiring to be as heavily armoured. Submarines, which had proved to be an effective weapon during the First World War, were anticipated by all sides to be important in the second. The British focused development on anti-submarine weaponry and tactics, such as sonar and convoys, while Germany focused on improving its offensive capability, with designs such as the Type VII submarine and wolfpack tactics. Gradually, improving Allied technologies such as the Leigh light, hedgehog, squid, and homing torpedoes proved victorious over the German submarines.

Land warfare changed from the static front lines of trench warfare of World War I, which had relied on improved artillery that outmatched the speed of both infantry and cavalry, to increased mobility and combined arms. The tank, which had been used predominantly for infantry support in the First World War, had evolved into the primary weapon. In the late 1930s, tank design was considerably more advanced than it had been during World War I, and advances continued throughout the war with increases in speed, armour and firepower. At the start of the war, most commanders thought enemy tanks should be met by tanks with superior



specifications. This idea was challenged by the poor performance of the relatively light early tank guns against armour, and German doctrine of avoiding tank-versus-tank combat. This, along with Germany's use of combined arms, were among the key elements of their highly successful blitzkrieg tactics across Poland and France. Many means of destroying tanks, including indirect artillery, anti-tank guns (both towed and self-propelled), mines, short-ranged infantry antitank weapons, and other tanks were used. Even with large-scale mechanisation, infantry remained the backbone of all forces, and throughout the war, most infantry were equipped similarly to World War I. The portable machine gun spread, a notable example being the German MG34, and various submachine guns which were suited to close combat in urban and jungle settings. The assault rifle, a late war development incorporating many features of the rifle and submachine gun, became the standard postwar infantry weapon for most armed forces.

Most major belligerents attempted to solve the problems of complexity and security involved in using large codebooks for cryptography by designing ciphering machines, the most well known being the German Enigma machine. Development of SIGINT (*signals intelligence*) and cryptanalysis enabled the countering process of decryption. Notable examples were the Allied decryption of Japanese naval codes and British Ultra, a pioneering method for decoding Enigma benefiting from information given to the United Kingdom by the Polish Cipher Bureau, which had been decoding early versions of Enigma before the war. Another aspect of military intelligence was the use of deception, which the Allies used to great effect, such as in operations Mincemeat and Bodyguard.

Other technological and engineering feats achieved during, or as a result of, the war include the world's first programmable computers (Z3, Colossus, and ENIAC), guided missiles and modern rockets, the Manhattan Project's development of nuclear weapons, operations research and the development of artificial harbours and oil pipelines under the English Channel. Penicillin was first mass-produced and used during the war (see Stabilization and mass production of penicillin).

## **Chapter 2**

# **Allies of World War II**

The Allies of World War II were a group of countries that together opposed the Axis powers during the Second World War (1939–1945). The Allies promoted the alliance as a means to defeat Nazi Germany, the Empire of Japan, Fascist Italy and their allies.

At the start of the war on 1 September 1939, the Allies consisted of Poland, the United Kingdom, and France as well as their dependent states, such as British India. They were joined by the independent Dominions of the British Commonwealth: Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. After the start of the German invasion of North Europe until the Balkan Campaign, the Netherlands, Belgium, Greece, and Yugoslavia joined the Allies. After first having cooperated with Germany in invading Poland whilst remaining neutral in the Allied-Axis conflict, the Soviet Union perforce joined the Allies in June 1941 after being invaded by Germany. The United States refused to join their allies when war broke within Europe, however, they did provide war materiel through their 'Lend-Lease' scheme beginning in March 1941, and officially joined in December 1941 after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour. China had already been in a prolonged war with Japan since the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 1937 and officially joined the Allies in December 1941.

The Big Three—the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and the United States—formed a Grand Alliance that was key to victory. They controlled Allied strategy; relations between the

United Kingdom and the United States were especially close. The alliance was formalized by the Declaration by United Nations, on 1 January 1942. The Big Three together with China were referred to as a "trusteeship of the powerful", then were recognized as the "Four Powers" in the Declaration by United Nations and later as the "Four Policemen" of the United Nations.

After the war ended, the Allied states became the basis of the modern United Nations.

## **Origins**

The origins of the Allied powers stem from the Allies of World War I and cooperation of the victorious powers at the Paris Peace Conference, 1919. Germany resented signing the Treaty of Versailles. The new Weimar Republic's legitimacy became shaken. However, the 1920s were peaceful.

With the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the ensuing Great Depression, political unrest in Europe soared including the rise in support of revanchist nationalists in Germany who blamed the severity of the economic crisis on the Treaty of Versailles. By the early 1930s, the Nazi Party led by Adolf Hitler became the dominant revanchist movement in Germany and Hitler and the Nazis gained power in 1933. The Nazi regime demanded the immediate cancellation of the Treaty of Versailles and made claims to German-populated Austria, and German-populated territories of Czechoslovakia. The likelihood of war was high, and the question was whether it could be avoided through strategies such as appeasement.

In Asia, when Japan seized Manchuria in 1931, the League of Nations condemned it for aggression against China. Japan responded by leaving the League of Nations in March 1933. After four quiet years, the Sino-Japanese War erupted in 1937 with Japanese forces invading China. The League of Nations condemned Japan's actions and initiated sanctions on Japan. The United States, in particular, was angered at Japan and sought to support China.

In March 1939, Germany took over Czechoslovakia, violating the Munich Agreement signed six months before, and demonstrating that the appeasement policy was a failure. Britain and France decided that Hitler had no intention to uphold diplomatic agreements and responded by preparing for war. On 31 March 1939, Britain formed the Anglo-Polish military alliance in an effort to avert a German attack on the country. Also, the French had a long-standing alliance with Poland since 1921. The Soviet Union sought an alliance with the western powers, but Hitler ended the risk of a war with Stalin by signing the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact in August 1939. The agreement secretly divided the independent states of Central and Eastern Europe between the two powers and assured adequate oil supplies for the German war machine.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland; two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany. Then, on 17 September 1939, the Soviet Union invaded Poland from the east. Britain and France established the Anglo-French Supreme War Council to coordinate military decisions. A Polish government-in-exile was set up in London and it continued to be one of the Allies. After a quiet winter, Germany in April

1940 invaded and quickly defeated Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. Britain and its Empire stood alone against Hitler and Mussolini.

## **Grand Alliance**

The United States refused to join their allies when war broke within Europe, however, there was pre-emptive cooperation between the United Kingdom and the United States. In addition, through US armament supplies in the form of Lend-Lease beginning in March 1941, there was an effort to collaborate before the official forming of the alliance.

The First Inter-Allied Meeting took place in London in early June 1941 between the United Kingdom, the four co-belligerent British Dominions (Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa), the eight governments in exile (Belgium, Czechoslovakia, Greece, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Yugoslavia) and Free France. The Declaration of St James's Palace at the meeting set out a first vision for the postwar world.

In June 1941, Hitler broke the non-aggression agreement with Stalin and Germany invaded the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union declared war on Germany. Britain agreed to an alliance with the Soviet Union in July. The Atlantic Conference followed in August 1941 between American President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill which defined a common Anglo-American vision of the postwar world. At the Second Inter-Allied Meeting in London in September 1941, the eight European governments in exile, together with the Soviet Union and representatives of the Free French Forces,

unanimously adopted adherence to the common principles of policy set forth by Britain and the United States. In December, Japan attacked the US and Britain resulting in a state of war between the US and the Axis powers, with whom China also declared war. The main lines of World War II had formed. Churchill referred to the Grand Alliance of the United Kingdom, the United States, and the Soviet Union.

The alliance was one of convenience in the fight against the Axis powers. The British had reason to ask for one as Germany, Italy, and Imperial Japan threatened not only the colonies of the British Empire in North Africa and Asia but also the British mainland. The United States felt that the Japanese and German expansion should be contained, but ruled out force until the attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

The Soviet Union, after the breaking of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact by the instigation of Operation Barbarossa in 1941, greatly despised German belligerence and the unchallenged Japanese expansion in the East, particularly considering their defeat in several previous wars with Japan. They also recognized, as the US and Britain had suggested, the advantages of a two-front war.

### **The Big Three**

Franklin D. Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin were The Big Three leaders. They were in frequent contact through ambassadors, top generals, foreign ministers and special emissaries such as the American Harry Hopkins. It is also often called the "Strange Alliance", because it united the

leaders of the world's greatest capitalist state (the United States), the greatest socialist state (the Soviet Union) and the greatest colonial power (the United Kingdom).

Relations between them resulted in the major decisions that shaped the war effort and planned for the postwar world. Cooperation between the United Kingdom and the United States was especially close and included forming a Combined Chiefs of Staff.

There were numerous high-level conferences; in total Churchill attended 14 meetings, Roosevelt 12, and Stalin 5. Most visible were the three summit conferences that brought together the three top leaders. The Allied policy toward Germany and Japan evolved and developed at these three conferences.

- Tehran Conference (codename "Eureka") – first meeting of The Big Three (28 November 1943 – 1 December 1943)
- Yalta Conference (codename "Argonaut") – second meeting of The Big Three (4–11 February 1945)
- Potsdam Conference (codename "Terminal") – third and final meeting of The Big Three (Truman having taken over for Roosevelt, 17 July – 2 August 1945)

## **Tensions**

There were many tensions among the Big Three leaders, although they were not enough to break the alliance during wartime.

In 1942 Roosevelt proposed becoming, with China, the Four Policemen of world peace. Although the 'Four Powers' were



reflected in the wording of the Declaration by United Nations, Roosevelt's proposal was not initially supported by Churchill or Stalin.

Division emerged over the length of time taken by the Western Allies to establish a second front in Europe. Stalin and the Soviets used the potential employment of the second front as an 'acid test' for their relations with the Anglo-American powers. The Soviets were forced to use as much manpower as possible in the fight against the Germans, whereas the United States had the luxury of flexing industrial power, but with the "minimum possible expenditure of American lives." Roosevelt delayed until 1944 to enforce a second front in Europe; in the meantime he had endorsed the British proposal to invade North Africa, straining Anglo-American and Soviet relations.

The essential ideological differences between the United States and the Soviet Union strained their relationship. Tensions between the two countries had existed for decades, with the Soviets remembering America's participation in the armed intervention against the Bolsheviks in the Russian Civil War as well as its long refusal to recognize the Soviet Union's existence as a state. The original terms of the Lend-Lease loan were amended towards the Soviets, to be put in line with British terms. The United States would now expect interest with the repayment from the Soviets, following the initiation of the Operation Barbarossa, at the end of the war—the United States were not looking to support any "postwar Soviet reconstruction efforts", which eventually manifested into the Molotov Plan. At the Tehran conference, Stalin judged Roosevelt to be a "lightweight compared to the more formidable

Churchill". During the meetings from 1943 to 1945, there were disputes over the growing list of demands from the USSR.

Tensions increased further when Roosevelt died and his successor Harry Truman rejected demands put forth by Stalin. Roosevelt understood that cultural differences could doom the alliance and, as opposed to the likes of Truman and W. Averell Harriman, Roosevelt wanted to play down these tensions. Roosevelt felt he "understood Stalin's psychology" which aided him in cooperating more successfully with the Soviet Union in comparison to Truman, stating "Stalin was too anxious to prove a point... he suffered from an inferiority complex."

## **United Nations**

### **Four Powers**

During December 1941, U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt devised the name "United Nations" for the Allies and proposed it to British Prime Minister Winston Churchill. He referred to the Big Three and China as a "trusteeship of the powerful", and then later the "Four Powers".

### **Declaration by United Nations**

The alliance was formalised in the Declaration by United Nations signed on 1 January 1942.

These were the 26 signatories of the declaration:

- Australia
- Belgium

- Canada
- China
- Costa Rica
- Cuba
- Czechoslovakia
- Dominican Republic
- El Salvador
- Greece
- Guatemala
- Haiti
- Honduras
- India
- Luxembourg
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nicaragua
- Norway
- Panama
- Poland
- Soviet Union
- South Africa
- United Kingdom
- United States
- Yugoslavia

### **Alliance growing**

The United Nations began growing immediately after its formation. In 1942, Mexico, the Philippines and Ethiopia adhered to the declaration. The African state had been restored in its independence by British forces after the Italian defeat on AmbaAlagi in 1941, while the Philippines, still dependent on

Washington but granted international diplomatic recognition, was allowed to join on 10 June despite their occupation by Japan.

In 1943, the Declaration was signed by Iraq, Iran, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia. A Tripartite Treaty of Alliance with Britain and the USSR formalised Iran's assistance to the Allies. In Rio de Janeiro, Brazilian dictator Getúlio Vargas was considered near to fascist ideas, but realistically joined the United Nations after their evident successes.

In 1944, Liberia and France signed. The French situation was very confused. Free French forces were recognized only by Britain, while the United States considered Vichy France to be the legal government of the country until Operation Overlord, while also preparing US occupation forces. Winston Churchill urged Roosevelt to restore France to its status of a major power after the liberation of Paris in August 1944; the Prime Minister feared that after the war, Britain could remain the sole great power in Europe facing the Communist threat, as it was in 1940 and 1941 against Nazism.

During the early part of 1945, Peru, Chile, Paraguay, Venezuela, Uruguay, Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria (these latter two French colonies had been declared independent states by British occupation troops, despite protests by Pétain and later De Gaulle) and Ecuador became signatories. Ukraine and Belarus, which were not independent states but parts of the Soviet Union, were accepted as members of the United Nations as a way to provide greater influence to Stalin, who had only Yugoslavia as a communist partner in the alliance.

# Major affiliated state combatants

## United Kingdom

British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain delivered his *Ultimatum Speech* on 3 September 1939 which declared war on Germany, a few hours before France.

As the Statute of Westminster 1931 was not yet ratified by the parliaments of Australia and New Zealand, the British declaration of war on Germany also applied to those dominions. The other dominions and members of the British Commonwealth declared war from 3 September 1939, all within one week of each other; these countries were Canada, India and South Africa as well as Nepal.

During the war, Churchill attended seventeen Allied conferences at which key decisions and agreements were made. He was "the most important of the Allied leaders during the first half of World War II".

## Africa colonies and dependencies

British West Africa and the British colonies in East and Southern Africa participated, mainly in the North African, East African and Middle-Eastern theatres. Two West African and one East African division served in the Burma Campaign.

Southern Rhodesia was a self-governing colony, having received responsible government in 1923. It was not a sovereign dominion. It governed itself internally and controlled its own armed forces, but had no diplomatic autonomy, and,

therefore, was officially at war as soon as Britain was at war. The Southern Rhodesian colonial government issued a symbolic declaration of war nevertheless on 3 September 1939, which made no difference diplomatically but preceded the declarations of war made by all other British dominions and colonies.

### **American colonies and dependencies**

These included: the British West Indies, British Honduras, British Guiana and the Falkland Islands. The Dominion of Newfoundland was directly ruled as a royal colony from 1933 to 1949, run by a governor appointed by London who made the decisions regarding Newfoundland.

### **Asia**

British India included the areas and peoples covered by later India, Bangladesh, Pakistan and (until 1937) Burma/Myanmar, which later became a separate colony.

British Malaya covers the areas of Peninsular Malaysia and Singapore, while British Borneo covers the area of Brunei, including Sabah and Sarawak of Malaysia.

Territories controlled by the Colonial Office, namely the Crown Colonies, were controlled politically by the UK and therefore also entered hostilities with Britain's declaration of war. At the outbreak of World War II, the British Indian Army numbered 205,000 men. Later during World War II, the Indian Army became the largest all-volunteer force in history, rising to over 2.5 million men in size.

Indian soldiers earned 30 Victoria Crosses during the Second World War. It suffered 87,000 military casualties (more than any Crown colony but fewer than the United Kingdom). The UK suffered 382,000 military casualties.

Protectorates included: Kuwait was a protectorate of the United Kingdom formally established in 1899. The Trucial States were protectorates in the Persian Gulf.

Palestine was a mandate dependency created in the peace agreements after World War I from the former territory of the Ottoman Empire, Iraq.

## **In Europe**

The Cyprus Regiment was formed by the British Government during the Second World War and made part of the British Army structure. It was mostly Greek Cypriot volunteers and Turkish-speaking Cypriot inhabitants of Cyprus but also included other Commonwealth nationalities. On a brief visit to Cyprus in 1943, Winston Churchill praised the "soldiers of the Cyprus Regiment who have served honourably on many fields from Libya to Dunkirk". About 30,000 Cypriots served in the Cyprus Regiment. The regiment was involved in action from the very start and served at Dunkirk, in the Greek Campaign (about 600 soldiers were captured in Kalamata in 1941), North Africa (Operation Compass), France, the Middle East and Italy. Many soldiers were taken prisoner especially at the beginning of the war and were interned in various PoW camps (Stalag) including Lamsdorf (Stalag VIII-B), Stalag IVC at Wistritz bei Teplitz and Stalag 4b near Most in the Czech

Republic. The soldiers captured in Kalamata were transported by train to prisoner of war camps.

## **France**

### **War declared**

After Germany invaded Poland, France declared war on Germany on 3 September 1939. In January 1940, French Prime Minister Édouard Daladier made a major speech denouncing the actions of Germany:

At the end of five months of war, one thing has become more and more clear. It is that Germany seeks to establish a domination of the world completely different from any known in world history.

The domination at which the Nazis aim is not limited to the displacement of the balance of power and the imposition of the supremacy of one nation. It seeks the systematic and total destruction of those conquered by Hitler and it does not treaty with the nations which it has subdued. He destroys them. He takes from them their whole political and economic existence and seeks even to deprive them of their history and culture. He wishes only to consider them as vital space and a vacant territory over which he has every right.

The human beings who constitute these nations are for him only cattle. He orders their massacre or migration. He compels them to make room for their conquerors. He does not even take the trouble to impose any war tribute on them. He just takes all their wealth and, to prevent any revolt, he scientifically



seeks the physical and moral degradation of those whose independence he has taken away.

France experienced several major phases of action during World War II:

- The "Phoney War" of 1939–1940, also called *drôle de guerre* in France, *dziwnawojna* in Poland (both meaning "Strange War"), or the "*Sitzkrieg*" ("Sitting War") in Germany.
- The Battle of France in May–June 1940, which resulted in the defeat of the Allies, the fall of the French Third Republic, the German occupation of northern and western France, and the creation of the rump state Vichy France, which received diplomatic recognition from the Axis and most neutral countries including the United States.
- The period of resistance against the occupation and Franco-French struggle for control of the colonies between the Vichy regime and the Free French, who continued the fight on the Allies' side after the Appeal of 18 June by General Charles de Gaulle, recognized by the United Kingdom as France's government-in-exile. It culminated in the Allied landings in North Africa on 11 November 1942, when Vichy ceased to exist as an independent entity after having been invaded by both the Axis and the Allies simultaneously, being thereafter only the nominal government in charge during the occupation of France. Vichy forces in French North Africa switched allegiance and merged with the Free French to

participate in the campaigns of Tunisia and of Italy and the invasion of Corsica in 1943–44.

- The liberation of mainland France beginning with D-Day on 6 June 1944 and operation Overlord, and then with operation Dragoon on 15 August 1944, leading to the Liberation of Paris on 25 August 1944 by the Free French 2e Division Blindée and the installation of the Provisional Government of the French Republic in the newly liberated capital.
- Participation of the re-established provisional French Republic's First Army in the Allied advance from Paris to the Rhine and the Western Allied invasion of Germany until V-E Day on 8 May 1945.

## **Colonies and dependencies**

In Africa

In Africa these included: French West Africa, French Equatorial Africa, the League of Nations mandates of French Cameroun and French Togoland, French Madagascar, French Somaliland, and the protectorates of French Tunisia and French Morocco.

French Algeria was then not a colony or dependency but a fully-fledged part of metropolitan France.

In Asia and Oceania

In Asia and Oceania these included: French Polynesia, Wallis and Futuna, New Caledonia, the New Hebrides, French Indochina, French India, the mandates of Greater Lebanon and

French Syria. The French government in 1936 attempted to grant independence to its mandate of Syria in the Franco-Syrian Treaty of Independence of 1936 signed by France and Syria. However, opposition to the treaty grew in France and the treaty was not ratified. Syria had become an official republic in 1930 and was largely self-governing. In 1941, a British-led invasion supported by Free French forces expelled Vichy French forces in Operation Exporter.

In the Americas

In the Americas these included: Martinique, Guadeloupe, French Guiana and Saint Pierre and Miquelon.

## **Soviet Union**

### **History**

In the lead up to the war between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, relations between the two states underwent several stages. General Secretary Joseph Stalin and the government of the Soviet Union had supported so-called popular front movements of anti-fascists including communists and non-communists from 1935 to 1939. The popular front strategy was terminated from 1939 to 1941 when the Soviet Union cooperated with Germany in 1939 in the occupation and partitioning of Poland. The Soviet leadership refused to endorse either the Allies or the Axis from 1939 to 1941, as it called the Allied-Axis conflict an "imperialist war".

Stalin had studied Hitler, including reading *Mein Kampf* and from it knew of Hitler's motives for destroying the Soviet

Union. As early as in 1933, the Soviet leadership voiced its concerns with the alleged threat of a potential German invasion of the country should Germany attempt a conquest of Lithuania, Latvia, or Estonia, and in December 1933 negotiations began for the issuing of a joint Polish-Soviet declaration guaranteeing the sovereignty of the three Baltic countries. However, Poland withdrew from the negotiations following German and Finnish objections. The Soviet Union and Germany at this time competed with each other for influence in Poland. The Soviet government also was concerned with the anti-Soviet sentiment in Poland and particularly Józef Piłsudski's proposed Polish federation that would include the territories of Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, and Ukraine within it that threatened the territorial integrity of the Soviet Union.

On 20 August 1939, forces of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics under General Georgy Zhukov, together with the People's Republic of Mongolia eliminated the threat of conflict in the east with a victory over Imperial Japan at the Battle of KhalkhinGol in eastern Mongolia.

On the same day, Soviet party leader Joseph Stalin received a telegram from German Chancellor Adolf Hitler, suggesting that German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop fly to Moscow for diplomatic talks. (After receiving a lukewarm response throughout the spring and summer, Stalin abandoned attempts for a better diplomatic relationship with France and the United Kingdom.)

On 23 August, Ribbentrop and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov signed the non-aggression pact including

secret protocols dividing Eastern Europe into defined "spheres of influence" for the two regimes, and specifically concerning the partition of the Polish state in the event of its "territorial and political rearrangement".

On 15 September 1939, Stalin concluded a durable ceasefire with Japan, to take effect the following day (it would be upgraded to a non-aggression pact in April 1941). The day after that, 17 September, Soviet forces invaded Poland from the east. Although some fighting continued until 5 October, the two invading armies held at least one joint military parade on 25 September, and reinforced their non-military partnership with the German–Soviet Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Demarcation on 28 September. German and Soviet cooperation against Poland in 1939 has been described as co-belligerence.

On 30 November, the Soviet Union attacked Finland, for which it was expelled from the League of Nations. In the following year of 1940, while the world's attention was focused upon the German invasion of France and Norway, the USSR militarily occupied and annexed Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as well as parts of Romania.

German-Soviet treaties were brought to an end by the German surprise attack on the USSR on 22 June 1941. After the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, Stalin endorsed the Western Allies as part of a renewed popular front strategy against Germany and called for the international communist movement to make a coalition with all those who opposed the Nazis. The Soviet Union soon entered in alliance with the United Kingdom. Following the USSR, a number of other communist, pro-Soviet or Soviet-controlled forces fought

against the Axis powers during the Second World War. They were as follows: the Albanian National Liberation Front, the Chinese Red Army, the Greek National Liberation Front, the Hukbalahap, the Malayan Communist Party, the People's Republic of Mongolia, the Polish People's Army, the Tuvan People's Republic (annexed by the Soviet Union in 1944), the Viet Minh and the Yugoslav Partisans.

The Soviet Union intervened against Japan and its client state in Manchuria in 1945, cooperating with the Nationalist Government of China and the Nationalist Party led by Chiang Kai-shek; though also cooperating, preferring, and encouraging the Communist Party led by Mao Zedong to take effective control of Manchuria after expelling Japanese forces.

## **United States**

### **War justifications**

The United States had indirectly supported Britain's war effort against Germany up to 1941 and declared its opposition to territorial aggrandizement. Materiel support to Britain was provided while the U.S. was officially neutral via the Lend-Lease Act starting in 1941.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill in August 1941 promulgated the Atlantic Charter that pledged commitment to achieving "the final destruction of Nazi tyranny". Signing the Atlantic Charter, and thereby joining the "United Nations" was the way a state joined the Allies, and also became eligible for membership in the United Nations world body that formed in 1945.

The US strongly supported the Nationalist Government in China in its war with Japan, and provided military equipment, supplies, and volunteers to the Nationalist Government of China to assist in its war effort. In December 1941 Japan opened the war with its attack on Pearl Harbor, the US declared war on Japan, and Japan's allies Germany and Italy declared war on the US, bringing the US into World War II.

The US played a central role in liaising among the Allies and especially among the Big Four. At the Arcadia Conference in December 1941, shortly after the US entered the war, the US and Britain established a Combined Chiefs of Staff, based in Washington, which deliberated the military decisions of both the US and Britain.

## **History**

On 8 December 1941, following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States Congress declared war on Japan at the request of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This was followed by Germany and Italy declaring war on the United States on 11 December, bringing the country into the European theatre.

The US-led Allied forces in the Pacific theatre against Japanese forces from 1941 to 1945. From 1943 to 1945, the US led and coordinated the Western Allies' war effort in Europe under the leadership of General Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The surprise attack on Pearl Harbor followed by Japan's swift attacks on Allied locations throughout the Pacific, resulted in major US losses in the first several months in the war, including losing control of the Philippines, Guam, Wake Island and several Aleutian islands including Attu and Kiska to

Japanese forces. American naval forces attained some early successes against Japan. One was the bombing of Japanese industrial centres in the Doolittle Raid. Another was repelling a Japanese invasion of Port Moresby in New Guinea during the Battle of the Coral Sea.

A major turning point in the Pacific War was the Battle of Midway where American naval forces were outnumbered by Japanese forces that had been sent to Midway to draw out and destroy American aircraft carriers in the Pacific and seize control of Midway that would place Japanese forces in proximity to Hawaii. However American forces managed to sink four of Japan's six large aircraft carriers that had initiated the attack on Pearl Harbor along with other attacks on Allied forces.

Afterwards, the US began an offensive against Japanese-captured positions. The Guadalcanal Campaign from 1942 to 1943 was a major contention point where Allied and Japanese forces struggled to gain control of Guadalcanal.

## **Colonies and dependencies**

### **In the Americas and the Pacific**

The United States held multiple dependencies in the Americas, such as Alaska, the Panama Canal Zone, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

In the Pacific it held multiple island dependencies such as American Samoa, Guam, Hawaii, Midway Islands, Wake Island and others. These dependencies were directly involved in the Pacific campaign of the war.



## **In Asia**

The Commonwealth of the Philippines was a sovereign protectorate referred to as an "associated state" of the United States. From late 1941 to 1944, the Philippines was occupied by Japanese forces, who established the Second Philippine Republic as a client state that had nominal control over the country.

## **China**

In the 1920s the Soviet Union provided military assistance to the Kuomintang, or the Nationalists and helped reorganize their party along Leninist lines: a unification of party, state, and army. In exchange the Nationalists agreed to let members of the Chinese Communist Party join the Nationalists on an individual basis. However, following the nominal unification of China at the end of the Northern Expedition in 1928, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek purged leftists from his party and fought against the revolting Chinese Communist Party, former warlords, and other militarist factions. A fragmented China provided easy opportunities for Japan to gain territories piece by piece without engaging in total war. Following the 1931 Mukden Incident, the puppet state of Manchukuo was established. Throughout the early to mid-1930s, Chiang's anti-communist and anti-militarist campaigns continued while he fought small, incessant conflicts against Japan, usually followed by unfavorable settlements and concessions after military defeats.

In 1936 Chiang was forced to cease his anti-communist military campaigns after his kidnap and release by Zhang

Xueliang, and reluctantly formed a nominal alliance with the Communists, while the Communists agreed to fight under the nominal command of the Nationalists against the Japanese. Following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident of 7 July 1937, China and Japan became embroiled in a full-scale war. The Soviet Union, wishing to keep China in the fight against Japan, supplied China with military assistance until 1941, when it signed a non-aggression pact with Japan. China formally declared war on Japan, as well as Germany and Italy, in December 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Continuous clashes between the Communists and Nationalists behind enemy lines cumulated in a major military conflict between these two former allies that effectively ended their cooperation against the Japanese, and China had been divided between the internationally recognized Nationalist China under the leadership of Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek and Communist China under the leadership of Mao Zedong until the Japanese surrendered in 1945.

## **Factions**

### **Nationalists**

Prior to the alliance of Germany and Italy to Japan, the Nationalist Government held close relations with both Germany and Italy. In the early 1930s, Sino-German cooperation existed between the Nationalist Government and Germany in military and industrial matters. Nazi Germany provided the largest proportion of Chinese arms imports and technical expertise. Relations between the Nationalist Government and Italy during the 1930s varied, however even after the Nationalist

Government followed League of Nations sanctions against Italy for its invasion of Ethiopia, the international sanctions proved unsuccessful, and relations between the Fascist government in Italy and the Nationalist Government in China returned to normal shortly afterwards. Up until 1936, Mussolini had provided the Nationalists with Italian military air and naval missions to help the Nationalists fight against Japanese incursions and communist insurgents. Italy also held strong commercial interests and a strong commercial position in China supported by the Italian concession in Tianjin. However, after 1936 the relationship between the Nationalist Government and Italy changed due to a Japanese diplomatic proposal to recognize the Italian Empire that included occupied Ethiopia within it in exchange for Italian recognition of Manchukuo, Italian Foreign Minister Galeazzo Ciano accepted this offer by Japan, and on 23 October 1936 Japan recognized the Italian Empire and Italy recognized Manchukuo, as well as discussing increasing commercial links between Italy and Japan.

The Nationalist Government held close relations with the United States. The United States opposed Japan's invasion of China in 1937 that it considered an illegal violation of China's sovereignty, and offered the Nationalist Government diplomatic, economic, and military assistance during its war against Japan. In particular, the United States sought to bring the Japanese war effort to a complete halt by imposing a full embargo on all trade between the United States to Japan, Japan was dependent on the United States for 80 per cent of its petroleum, resulting in an economic and military crisis for Japan that could not continue its war effort with China without access to petroleum. In November 1940, American

military aviator Claire Lee Chennault upon observing the dire situation in the air war between China and Japan, set out to organize a volunteer squadron of American fighter pilots to fight alongside the Chinese against Japan, known as the Flying Tigers. US President Franklin D. Roosevelt accepted dispatching them to China in early 1941. However, they only became operational shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

The Soviet Union recognised the Republic of China but urged reconciliation with the Communist Party of China and inclusion of Communists in the government. The Soviet Union also urged military and cooperation between Nationalist China and Communist China during the war.

Even though China had been fighting the longest among all the Allied powers, it only officially joined the Allies after the attack on Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941. China fought the Japanese Empire before joining the Allies in the Pacific War. Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek thought Allied victory was assured with the entrance of the United States into the war, and he declared war on Germany and the other Axis states. However, Allied aid remained low because the Burma Road was closed and the Allies suffered a series of military defeats against Japan early on in the campaign. General Sun Li-jen led the R.O.C. forces to the relief of 7,000 British forces trapped by the Japanese in the Battle of Yenangyaung. He then reconquered North Burma and re-established the land route to China by the Ledo Road. But the bulk of military aid did not arrive until the spring of 1945. More than 1.5 million Japanese troops were trapped in the China Theatre, troops that otherwise could have been deployed elsewhere if China had collapsed and made a separate peace.

## **Communists**

Communist China had been tacitly supported by the Soviet Union since the 1920s, though the Soviet Union diplomatically recognised the Republic of China, Joseph Stalin supported cooperation between the Nationalists and the Communists—including pressuring the Nationalist Government to grant the Communists state and military positions in the government. This was continued into the 1930s that fell in line with the Soviet Union's subversion policy of popular fronts to increase communists' influence in governments. The Soviet Union urged military and cooperation between Soviet China and Nationalist China during China's war against Japan. Initially Mao Zedong accepted the demands of the Soviet Union and in 1938 had recognized Chiang Kai-shek as the "leader" of the "Chinese people". In turn, the Soviet Union accepted Mao's tactic of "continuous guerilla warfare" in the countryside that involved a goal of extending the Communist bases, even if it would result in increased tensions with the Nationalists.

After the breakdown of their cooperation with the Nationalists in 1941, the Communists prospered and grew as the war against Japan dragged on, building up their sphere of influence wherever opportunities were presented, mainly through rural mass organizations, administrative, land and tax reform measures favoring poor peasants; while the Nationalists attempted to neutralize the spread of Communist influence by military blockade and fighting the Japanese at the same time.

The Communist Party's position in China was boosted further upon the Soviet invasion of Manchuria in August 1945 against the Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo and the Japanese

Kwantung Army in China and Manchuria. Upon the intervention of the Soviet Union against Japan in World War II in 1945, Mao Zedong in April and May 1945 had planned to mobilize 150,000 to 250,000 soldiers from across China to work with forces of the Soviet Union in capturing Manchuria.

## **Other affiliated state combatants**

### **Albania**

Albania was retroactively recognized as an "Associated Power" at the 1946 Paris conference and officially signed the treaty ending WWII between the "Allied and Associated Powers" and Italy in Paris, on 10 February 1947.

### **Australia**

Australia was a sovereign Dominion under the Australian monarchy, as per the Statute of Westminster 1931. At the start of the war Australia followed Britain's foreign policies and accordingly declared war against Germany on 3 September 1939. Australian foreign policy became more independent after the Australian Labor Party formed government in October 1941, and Australia separately declared war against Finland, Hungary and Romania on 8 December 1941 and against Japan the next day.

### **Belgium**

Before the war, Belgium had pursued a policy of neutrality and only became an Allied member after being invaded by Germany on 10 May 1940. During the ensuing fighting, Belgian forces

fought alongside French and British forces against the invaders. While the British and French were struggling against the fast German advance elsewhere on the front, the Belgian forces were pushed into a pocket to the north.

Finally, on 28 May, the King Leopold III surrendered himself and his military to the Germans, having decided the Allied cause was lost.

The legal Belgian government was reformed as a government in exile in London. Belgian troops and pilots continued to fight on the Allied side as the Free Belgian Forces. Belgium itself was occupied, but a sizeable Resistance was formed and was loosely coordinated by the government in exile and other Allied powers.

British and Canadian troops arrived in Belgium in September 1944 and the capital, Brussels, was liberated on 6 September. Because of the Ardennes Offensive, the country was only fully liberated in early 1945.

## **Colonies and dependencies**

Belgium held the colony of the Belgian Congo and the League of Nations mandate of Ruanda-Urundi. The Belgian Congo was not occupied and remained loyal to the Allies as an important economic asset while its deposits of uranium were useful to the Allied efforts to develop the atomic bomb. Troops from the Belgian Congo participated in the East African Campaign against the Italians. The colonial *Force Publique* also served in other theatres including Madagascar, the Middle-East, India and Burma within British units.

## **Brazil**

Initially, Brazil maintained a position of neutrality, trading with both the Allies and the Axis, while Brazilian president Getúlio Vargas's quasi-Fascist policies indicated a leaning toward the Axis powers. However, as the war progressed, trade with the Axis countries became almost impossible and the United States initiated forceful diplomatic and economic efforts to bring Brazil onto the Allied side.

At the beginning of 1942, Brazil permitted the United States to set up air bases on its territory, especially in Natal, strategically located at the easternmost corner of the South American continent, and on 28 January the country severed diplomatic relations with Germany, Japan and Italy. After that, 36 Brazilian merchant ships were sunk by the German and Italian navies, which led the Brazilian government to declare war against Germany and Italy on 22 August 1942.

Brazil then sent a 25,700 strong Expeditionary Force to Europe that fought mainly on the Italian front, from September 1944 to May 1945. Also, the Brazilian Navy and Air Force acted in the Atlantic Ocean from the middle of 1942 until the end of the war. Brazil was the only South American country to send troops to fight in the European theatre in the Second World War.

## **Canada**

Canada was a sovereign Dominion under the Canadian monarchy, as per the Statute of Westminster 1931. In a symbolic statement of autonomous foreign policy Prime



Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King delayed parliament's vote on a declaration of war for seven days after Britain had declared war. Canada was the last member of the Commonwealth to declare war on Germany on 10 September 1939.

## **Cuba**

Because of Cuba's geographical position at the entrance of the Gulf of Mexico, Havana's role as the principal trading port in the West Indies, and the country's natural resources, Cuba was an important participant in the American Theater of World War II, and subsequently one of the greatest beneficiaries of the United States' Lend-Lease program. Cuba declared war on the Axis powers in December 1941, making it one of the first Latin American countries to enter the conflict, and by the war's end in 1945 its military had developed a reputation as being the most efficient and cooperative of all the Caribbean states. On 15 May 1943, the Cuban patrol boat CS-13 sank the German submarine *U-176*.

## **Czechoslovakia**

In 1938, with the Munich Agreement, Czechoslovakia, the United Kingdom, and France sought to resolve German irredentist claims to the Sudetenland region. As a result, the incorporation of the Sudetenland into Germany began on 1 October 1938. Additionally, a small northeastern part of the border region known as Zaolzie was occupied by and annexed to Poland. Further, by the First Vienna Award, Hungary received southern territories of Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia.

A Slovak State was proclaimed on 14 March 1939, and the next day Hungary occupied and annexed the remainder of Carpathian Ruthenia, and the German *Wehrmacht* moved into the remainder of the Czech Lands. On 16 March 1939 the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was proclaimed after negotiations with Emil Hácha, who remained technically head of state with the title of State President. After a few months, former Czechoslovak President Beneš organized a committee in exile and sought diplomatic recognition as the legitimate government of the First Czechoslovak Republic. The committee's success in obtaining intelligence and coordinating actions by the Czechoslovak resistance led first Britain and then the other Allies to recognize it in 1941. In December 1941 the Czechoslovak government-in-exile declared war on the Axis powers. Czechoslovakian military units took part in the war.

## **Dominican Republic**

The Dominican Republic was one of the very few countries willing to accept mass Jewish immigration during World War II. At the Évian Conference, it offered to accept up to 100,000 Jewish refugees. The DORSA (Dominican Republic Settlement Association) was formed with the assistance of the JDC, and helped settle Jews in Sosúa, on the northern coast. About 700 European Jews of Ashkenazi Jewish descent reached the settlement where each family received 33 hectares (82 acres) of land, 10 cows (plus 2 additional cows per children), a mule and a horse, and a US\$10,000 loan (about 176,000 dollars at 2021 prices) at 1% interest.

The Dominican Republic officially declared war on the Axis powers on 11 December 1941, after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

However, the Caribbean state had already been engaged in war actions since before the formal declaration of war. Dominican sailboats and schooners had been attacked on previous occasions by German submarines as, highlighting the case of the 1,993-ton merchant ship, "*San Rafael*", which was making a trip from Tampa, Florida to Kingston, Jamaica, when 80 miles away from its final destination, it was torpedoed by the German submarine U-125, causing the command to abandon the ship by the commander. Although the crew of *San Rafael* managed to escape the event, it would be remembered by the Dominican press as a sign of the *infamy of the German submarines and the danger they represented in the Caribbean*.

Recently, due to a research work carried out by the Embassy of the United States of America in Santo Domingo and the Institute of Dominican Studies of the City of New York (CUNY), documents of the Department of Defense were discovered in which it was confirmed that around 340 men and women of Dominican origin were part of the US Armed Forces during the World War II. Many of them received medals and other recognitions for their outstanding actions in combat.

## **Ethiopia**

The Ethiopian Empire was invaded by Italy on 3 October 1935. On 2 May 1936, Emperor Haile Selassie I fled into exile, just before the Italian occupation on 7 May. After the outbreak of World War II, the Ethiopian government-in-exile cooperated with the British during the British Invasion of Italian East Africa beginning in June 1940. Haile Selassie returned to his rule on 18 January 1941. Ethiopia declared war on Germany, Italy and Japan in December 1942.

## **Greece**

Greece was invaded by Italy on 28 October 1940 and subsequently joined the Allies. The Greek Army managed to stop the Italian offensive from Italy's protectorate of Albania, and Greek forces pushed Italian forces back into Albania. However, after the German invasion of Greece in April 1941, German forces managed to occupy mainland Greece and, a month later, the island of Crete.

The Greek government went into exile, while the country was placed under a puppet government and divided into occupation zones run by Italy, Germany and Bulgaria. From 1941, a strong resistance movement appeared, chiefly in the mountainous interior, where it established a "Free Greece" by mid-1943. Following the Italian capitulation in September 1943, the Italian zone was taken over by the Germans. Axis forces left mainland Greece in October 1944, although some Aegean islands, notably Crete, remained under German occupation until the end of the war.

## **Luxembourg**

Before the war, Luxembourg had pursued a policy of neutrality and only became an Allied member after being invaded by Germany on 10 May 1940. The government in exile fled, winding up in England. It made Luxembourgish language broadcasts to the occupied country on BBC radio. In 1944, the government in exile signed a treaty with the Belgian and Dutch governments, creating the Benelux Economic Union and also signed into the Bretton Woods system.

## **Mexico**

Mexico declared war on Germany in 1942 after German submarines attacked the Mexican oil tankers *Potrero del Llano* and *Faja de Oro* that were transporting crude oil to the United States. These attacks prompted President Manuel Ávila Camacho to declare war on the Axis powers.

Mexico formed Escuadrón 201 fighter squadron as part of the Fuerza Aérea Expedicionaria Mexicana (FAEM—"Mexican Expeditionary Air Force"). The squadron was attached to the 58th Fighter Group of the United States Army Air Forces and carried out tactical air support missions during the liberation of the main Philippine island of Luzon in the summer of 1945.

Some 300,000 Mexican citizens went to the United States to work on farms and factories. Some 15,000 US nationals of Mexican origin and Mexican residents in the US enrolled in the US Armed Forces and fought in various fronts around the world.

## **Netherlands**

The Netherlands became an Allied member after being invaded on 10 May 1940 by Germany. During the ensuing campaign, the Netherlands were defeated and occupied by Germany. The Netherlands was liberated by Canadian, British, American and other allied forces during the campaigns of 1944 and 1945. The Princess Irene Brigade, formed from escapees from the German invasion, took part in several actions in 1944 in Arromanches and in 1945 in the Netherlands. Navy vessels saw action in the British Channel, the North Sea and the Mediterranean,

generally as part of Royal Navy units. Dutch airmen flying British aircraft participated in the air war over Germany.

## **Colonies and dependencies**

The Dutch East Indies (modern-day Indonesia) was the principal Dutch colony in Asia, and was seized by Japan in 1942. During the Dutch East Indies Campaign, the Netherlands played a significant role in the Allied effort to halt the Japanese advance as part of the American-British-Dutch-Australian (ABDA) Command.

The ABDA fleet finally encountered the Japanese surface fleet at the Battle of Java Sea, at which Doorman gave the order to engage. During the ensuing battle the ABDA fleet suffered heavy losses, and was mostly destroyed after several naval battles around Java; the ABDA Command was later dissolved. The Japanese finally occupied the Dutch East Indies in February–March 1942. Dutch troops, aircraft and escaped ships continued to fight on the Allied side and also mounted a guerrilla campaign in Timor.

## **New Zealand**

New Zealand was a sovereign Dominion under the New Zealand monarchy, as per the Statute of Westminster 1931. It quickly entered World War II, officially declaring war on Germany on 3 September 1939, just hours after Britain. Unlike Australia, which had felt obligated to declare war, as it also had not ratified the Statute of Westminster, New Zealand did so as a sign of allegiance to Britain, and in recognition of Britain's abandonment of its former appeasement policy, which New

Zealand had long opposed. This led to then Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage declaring two days later:

*"With gratitude for the past and confidence in the future we range ourselves without fear beside Britain. Where she goes, we go; where she stands, we stand. We are only a small and young nation, but we march with a union of hearts and souls to a common destiny."*

## **Norway**

Because of its strategic location for control of the sea lanes in the North Sea and the Atlantic, both the Allies and Germany worried about the other side gaining control of the neutral country. Germany ultimately struck first with Operation Weserübung on 9 April 1940, resulting in the two-month-long Norwegian Campaign, which ended in a German victory and their war-long occupation of Norway.

Units of the Norwegian Armed Forces evacuated from Norway or raised abroad continued participating in the war from exile.

The Norwegian merchant fleet, then the fourth largest in the world, was organized into Nortraship to support the Allied cause. Nortraship was the world's largest shipping company, and at its height operated more than 1000 ships.

Norway was neutral when Germany invaded, and it is not clear when Norway became an Allied country. Great Britain, France and Polish forces in exile supported Norwegian forces against the invaders but without a specific agreement. Norway's cabinet signed a military agreement with Britain on 28 May 1941. This agreement allowed all Norwegian forces in exile to

operate under UK command. Norwegian troops in exile should primarily be prepared for the liberation of Norway, but could also be used to defend Britain. At the end of the war German forces in Norway surrendered to British officers on 8 May and allied troops occupied Norway until 7 June.

## **Poland**

The Invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, started the war in Europe, and the United Kingdom and France declared war on Germany on 3 September. Poland fielded the third biggest army among the European Allies, after the Soviet Union and United Kingdom, but before France.

Polish Army suffered a series of defeats in the first days of the invasion. The Soviet Union unilaterally considered the flight to Romania of President Ignacy Mościcki and Marshal Edward Rydz-Śmigły on 17 September as evidence of *debellatio* causing the extinction of the Polish state, and consequently declared itself allowed to invade (according to the Soviet position: "to protect") Eastern Poland starting from the same day. However, the Red Army had invaded the Second Polish Republic several hours before the Polish president fled to Romania.

The Soviets invaded on 17 September at 3 a.m., while president Mościcki crossed the Polish-Romanian border at 21:45 on the same day. The Polish military continued to fight against both the Germans and the Soviets, and the last major battle of the war, the Battle of Kock, ended at 1 a.m. on 6 October 1939 with the Independent Operational Group "Polesie," a field army, surrendering due to lack of ammunition. The country never officially surrendered to the



Third Reich, nor to the Soviet Union, primarily because neither of the totalitarian powers requested an official surrender, and continued the war effort under the Polish government in exile.

Polish soldiers fought under their own flag but under the command of the British military. They were major contributors to the Allies in the theatre of war west of Germany and in the theatre of war east of Germany, with the Soviet Union. The Polish armed forces in the West created after the fall of Poland played minor roles in the Battle of France, and larger ones in the Italian and North African Campaigns. The Soviet Union recognized the London-based government at first. But it broke diplomatic relations after the Katyn massacre of Polish nationals was revealed. In 1943, the Soviet Union organized the Polish People's Army under Zygmunt Berling, around which it constructed the post-war successor state People's Republic of Poland. The Polish People's Army formed in USSR took part in a number of battles of the Eastern Front, including the Battle of Berlin, the closing battle of the European theater of war. The Home Army, loyal to the London-based government and the largest underground force in Europe, as well other smaller resistance organizations in occupied Poland provided intelligence to the Allies and led to uncovering of Nazi war crimes (i.e., death camps).

## **South Africa**

South Africa was a sovereign Dominion under the South African monarchy, as per the Statute of Westminster 1931. South Africa held authority over the mandate of South-West Africa.

## **Yugoslavia**

Yugoslavia entered the war on the Allied side after the invasion of Axis powers on 6 April 1941. The Royal Yugoslav Army was thoroughly defeated in less than two weeks and the country was occupied starting on 18 April.

The Italian-backed Croatian fascist leader Ante Pavelić declared the Independent State of Croatia before the invasion was over. King Peter II and much of the Yugoslavian government had left the country. In the United Kingdom, they joined numerous other governments in exile from Nazi-occupied Europe. Beginning with the uprising in Herzegovina in June 1941, there was continuous anti-Axis resistance in Yugoslavia until the end of the war.

### **Resistance factions**

Before the end of 1941, the anti-Axis resistance movement split between the royalist Chetniks and the communist Yugoslav Partisans of Josip Broz Tito who fought both against each other during the war and against the occupying forces. The Yugoslav Partisans managed to put up considerable resistance to the Axis occupation, forming various liberated territories during the war. In August 1943, there were over 30 Axis divisions on the territory of Yugoslavia, not including the forces of the Croatian puppet state and other quisling formations. In 1944, the leading Allied powers persuaded Tito's Yugoslav Partisans and the royalist Yugoslav government led by Prime Minister Ivan Šubašić to sign the Treaty of Vis that created the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia.

## **Partisans**

The Partisans were a major Yugoslav resistance movement against the Axis occupation and partition of Yugoslavia. Initially, the Partisans were in rivalry with the Chetniks over control of the resistance movement.

However, the Partisans were recognized by both the Eastern and Western Allies as the primary resistance movement in 1943.

After that, their strength increased rapidly, from 100,000 at the beginning of 1943 to over 648,000 in September 1944. In 1945 they were transformed into the Yugoslav army, organized in 4 field armies with 800,000 fighters.

## **Chetniks**

The Chetniks, the short name given to the movement titled the *Yugoslav Army of the Fatherland*, were initially a major Allied Yugoslav resistance movement. However, due to their royalist and anti-communist views, Chetniks were considered to have begun collaborating with the Axis as a tactical move to focus on destroying their Partisan rivals.

The Chetniks presented themselves as a Yugoslav movement, but were primarily a Serb movement. They reached their peak in 1943 with 93,000 fighters. Their major contribution was Operation Halyard in 1944. In collaboration with the OSS, 413 Allied airmen shot down over Yugoslavia were rescued and evacuated.

# **Client and occupied states**

## **British**

### **Egypt**

Egypt was a neutral country for most of World War II, but the Anglo-Egyptian treaty of 1936 permitted British forces in Egypt to defend the Suez Canal.

The United Kingdom controlled Egypt and used it as a major base for Allied operations throughout the region, especially the battles in North Africa against Italy and Germany. Its highest priorities were control of the Eastern Mediterranean, and especially keeping the Suez Canal open for merchant ships and for military connections with India and Australia.

The Kingdom of Egypt was nominally an independent state since 1922 but effectively remained in the British sphere of influence with the British Mediterranean Fleet being stationed in Alexandria and British Army forces being stationed in the Suez Canal zone.

Egypt faced an Axis campaign led by Italian and German forces during the war. British frustration over King Farouk's reign over Egypt resulted in the Abdeen Palace incident of 1942 where British Army forces surrounded the royal palace and demanded a new government be established, nearly forcing the abdication of Farouk until he submitted to British demands. The Kingdom of Egypt joined the United Nations on 24 February 1945.

## **India (British Raj)**

At the outbreak of World War II, the British Indian Army numbered 205,000 men. Later during World War II, the Indian Army became the largest all-volunteer force in history, rising to over 2.5 million men in size. These forces included tank, artillery and airborne forces.

Indian soldiers earned 30 Victoria Crosses during the Second World War. During the war, India suffered more civilian casualties than the United Kingdom, with the Bengal famine of 1943 estimated to have killed at least 2–3 million people. In addition, India suffered 87,000 military casualties, more than any Crown colony but fewer than the United Kingdom, which suffered 382,000 military casualties.

## **Burma**

Burma was a British colony at the start of World War II. It was later invaded by Japanese forces and that contributed to the Bengal Famine of 1943. For the native Burmese, it was an uprising against colonial rule, so some fought on the Japanese's side, but most minorities fought on the Allies side. Burma also contributed resources such as rice and rubber.

## **Soviet sphere**

### **Bulgaria**

After a period of neutrality, Bulgaria joined the Axis powers from 1941 to 1944. The Orthodox Church and others convinced King Boris to not allow the Bulgarian Jews to be exported to

concentration camps. The king died shortly afterwards, suspected of being poisoned after a visit to Germany. Bulgaria abandoned the Axis and joined the Allies when the Soviet Union invaded, offering no resistance to the incoming forces. Bulgarian troops then fought alongside Soviet Army in Yugoslavia, Hungary and Austria. In the 1947 peace treaties, Bulgaria gained a small area near the Black Sea from Romania, making it the only former German ally to gain territory from WWII.

## **Central Asian and Caucasian Republics**

Among the Soviet forces during World War II, millions of troops were from the Soviet Central Asian Republics. They included 1,433,230 soldiers from Uzbekistan, more than 1 million from Kazakhstan, and more than 700,000 from Azerbaijan, among other Central Asian Republics.

## **Mongolia**

Mongolia fought against Japan during the Battles of KhalkhinGol in 1939 and the Soviet–Japanese War in August 1945 to protect its independence and to liberate Southern Mongolia from Japan and China. Mongolia had been a Soviet sphere of influence since the 1920s.

## **Poland**

By 1944, Poland entered the Soviet sphere of influence with the establishment of WładysławGomułka's communist regime. Polish forces fought alongside Soviet forces against Germany.

## **Romania**

Romania had initially been a member of the Axis powers but switched allegiance upon facing invasion by the Soviet Union. In a radio broadcast to the Romanian people and army on the night of 23 August 1944 King Michael issued a cease-fire, proclaimed Romania's loyalty to the Allies, announced the acceptance of an armistice (to be signed on 12 September) offered by the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States, and declared war on Germany. The coup accelerated the Red Army's advance into Romania, but did not avert a rapid Soviet occupation and capture of about 130,000 Romanian soldiers, who were transported to the Soviet Union where many perished in prison camps.

The armistice was signed three weeks later on 12 September 1944, on terms virtually dictated by the Soviet Union. Under the terms of the armistice, Romania announced its unconditional surrender to the USSR and was placed under the occupation of the Allied forces with the Soviet Union as their representative, in control of the media, communication, post, and civil administration behind the front.

Romanian troops then fought alongside the Soviet Army until the end of the war, reaching as far as Slovakia and Germany.

## **Tuva**

The Tuvan People's Republic was a partially recognized state founded from the former Tuvan protectorate of Imperial Russia. It was a client state of the Soviet Union and was annexed into the Soviet Union in 1944.

# Co-belligerent state combatants

## Italy

Italy initially had been a leading member of the Axis powers, however after facing multiple military losses including the loss of all of Italy's colonies to advancing Allied forces, *Duce* Benito Mussolini was deposed and arrested in July 1943 by order of King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy in co-operation with members of the Grand Council of Fascism who viewed Mussolini as having led Italy to ruin by allying with Germany in the war. Victor Emmanuel III dismantled the remaining apparatus of the Fascist regime and appointed Field Marshal Pietro Badoglio as Prime Minister of Italy. On 8 September 1943, Italy signed the Armistice of Cassibile with the Allies, ending Italy's war with the Allies and ending Italy's participation with the Axis powers. Expecting immediate German retaliation, Victor Emmanuel III and the Italian government relocated to southern Italy under Allied control. Germany viewed the Italian government's actions as an act of betrayal, and German forces immediately occupied all Italian territories outside of Allied control, in some cases even massacring Italian troops.

Italy became a co-belligerent of the Allies, and the Italian Co-Belligerent Army was created to fight against the German occupation of Northern Italy, where German paratroopers rescued Mussolini from arrest and he was placed in charge of a German puppet state known as the Italian Social Republic (RSI). Italy descended into civil war until the end of hostilities after his deposition and arrest, with Fascists loyal to him



allying with German forces and helping them against the Italian armistice government and partisans.

## **Legacy**

### **Charter of the United Nations**

- The Declaration by United Nations on 1 January 1942, signed by the Four Policemen – the United States, United Kingdom, Soviet Union and China – and 22 other nations laid the groundwork for the future of the United Nations. At the Potsdam Conference of July–August 1945, Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, proposed that the foreign ministers of China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, and the United States "should draft the peace treaties and boundary settlements of Europe", which led to the creation of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the "Big Five", and soon thereafter the establishment of those states as the permanent members of the UNSC.

The Charter of the United Nations was agreed to during the war at the United Nations Conference on International Organization, held between April and July 1945. The Charter was signed by 50 states on 26 June (Poland had its place reserved and later became the 51st "original" signatory), and was formally ratified shortly after the war on 24 October 1945. In 1944, the United Nations was formulated and negotiated among the delegations from the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and China at the Dumbarton Oaks

Conference where the formation and the permanent seats (for the "Big Five", China, France, the UK, US, and USSR) of the United Nations Security Council were decided. The Security Council met for the first time in the immediate aftermath of war on 17 January 1946.

These are the original 51 signatories (UNSC permanent members are asterisked):

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Argentine Republic</li> <li>• Commonwealth of Australia</li> <li>• Kingdom of Belgium</li> <li>• Republic of Bolivia</li> <li>• United States of Brazil</li> <li>• Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic</li> <li>• Dominion of Canada</li> <li>• Republic of Chile</li> <li>• Republic of China*</li> <li>• Republic of Colombia</li> <li>• Republic of Costa Rica</li> <li>• Republic of Cuba</li> <li>• Czechoslovak Republic</li> <li>• Kingdom of Denmark</li> <li>• Dominican Republic</li> <li>• Republic of Ecuador</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Imperial Kingdom of Iran</li> <li>• Kingdom of Iraq</li> <li>• Lebanese Republic</li> <li>• Republic of Liberia</li> <li>• Grand Duchy of Luxembourg</li> <li>• United Mexican States</li> <li>• Kingdom of the Netherlands</li> <li>• Dominion of New Zealand</li> <li>• Republic of Nicaragua</li> <li>• Kingdom of Norway</li> <li>• Republic of Panama</li> <li>• Republic of Paraguay</li> <li>• Republic of Peru</li> <li>• Commonwealth of the Philippines</li> <li>• Republic of Poland</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kingdom of Egypt</li><li>• Republic of El Salvador</li><li>• Ethiopian Empire</li><li>• French Republic*</li><li>• Kingdom of Greece</li><li>• Republic of Guatemala</li><li>• Republic of Haiti</li><li>• Republic of Honduras</li><li>• Indian Empire</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kingdom of Saudi Arabia</li><li>• Union of South Africa</li><li>• Syrian Republic</li><li>• Republic of Turkey</li><li>• Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic</li><li>• Union of Soviet Socialist Republics*</li><li>• United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*</li><li>• United States of America*</li><li>• Oriental Republic of Uruguay</li><li>• United States of Venezuela</li><li>• Democratic Federal Yugoslavia</li></ul>
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## Cold War

Despite the successful creation of the United Nations, the alliance of the Soviet Union with the United States and the western allies ultimately broke down and evolved into the Cold War, which took place over the following half-century.

## Chapter 3

# Battle of Britain

The Battle of Britain (German: *die Luftschlacht um England*, "the Air Battle for England") was a military campaign of the Second World War, in which the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the Fleet Air Arm (FAA) of the Royal Navy defended the United Kingdom (UK) against large-scale attacks by Nazi Germany's air force, the Luftwaffe. It has been described as the first major military campaign fought entirely by air forces.

The British officially recognise the battle's duration as being from 10 July until 31 October 1940, which overlaps the period of large-scale night attacks known as the Blitz, that lasted from 7 September 1940 to 11 May 1941. German historians do not accept this subdivision and regard the battle as a single campaign lasting from July 1940 to June 1941, including the Blitz.

The primary objective of the German forces was to compel Britain to agree to a negotiated peace settlement. In July 1940, the air and sea blockade began, with the Luftwaffe mainly targeting coastal-shipping convoys, as well as ports and shipping centres such as Portsmouth.

On 1 August, the Luftwaffe was directed to achieve air superiority over the RAF, with the aim of incapacitating RAF Fighter Command; 12 days later, it shifted the attacks to RAF airfields and infrastructure. As the battle progressed, the Luftwaffe also targeted factories involved in aircraft production

and strategic infrastructure. Eventually, it employed terror bombing on areas of political significance and on civilians.

The Germans had rapidly overwhelmed France and the Low Countries, leaving Britain to face the threat of invasion by sea. The German high command recognised the logistic difficulties of a seaborne attack, particularly while the Royal Navy controlled the English Channel and the North Sea. On 16 July, Hitler ordered the preparation of Operation Sea Lion as a potential amphibious and airborne assault on Britain, to follow once the Luftwaffe had air superiority over the Channel. In September, RAF Bomber Command night raids disrupted the German preparation of converted barges, and the Luftwaffe's failure to overwhelm the RAF forced Hitler to postpone and eventually cancel Operation Sea Lion. The Luftwaffe proved unable to sustain daylight raids, but their continued night-bombing operations on Britain became known as the Blitz.

Historian Stephen Bungay cited Germany's failure to destroy Britain's air defences to force an armistice (or even an outright surrender) as the first major German defeat in the Second World War and a crucial turning point in the conflict. The Battle of Britain takes its name from the speech given by Prime Minister Winston Churchill to the House of Commons on 18 June: "What General Weygand called the 'Battle of France' is over. I expect that the Battle of Britain is about to begin."

## **Background**

Strategic bombing during World War I introduced air attacks intended to panic civilian targets and led in 1918 to the amalgamation of the British army and navy air services into

the Royal Air Force (RAF). Its first Chief of the Air Staff, Hugh Trenchard, was among the military strategists in the 1920s, like Giulio Douhet, who saw air warfare as a new way to overcome the stalemate of trench warfare. Interception was nearly impossible, with fighter planes no faster than bombers. Their view (expressed vividly in 1932) was that the bomber will always get through, and that the only defence was a deterrent bomber force capable of matching retaliation. Predictions were made that a bomber offensive would quickly cause thousands of deaths and civilian hysteria leading to capitulation. However, widespread pacifism following the horrors of the First World War contributed to a reluctance to provide resources.

### **Developing air strategies**

Germany was forbidden a military air force by the 1919 Treaty of Versailles, and therefore air crew were trained by means of civilian and sport flying. Following a 1923 memorandum, the Deutsche LuftHansa airline developed designs for aircraft such as the Junkers Ju 52, which could carry passengers and freight, but also be readily adapted into a bomber. In 1926, the secret Lipetsk fighter-pilot school began operating. Erhard Milchorganised rapid expansion, and following the 1933 Nazi seizure of power, his subordinate Robert Knauss formulated a deterrence theory incorporating Douhet's ideas and Tirpitz's "risk theory". This proposed a fleet of heavy bombers to deter a preventive attack by France and Poland before Germany could fully rearm. A 1933–34 war game indicated a need for fighters and anti-aircraft protection as well as bombers. On 1 March 1935, the Luftwaffe was formally announced, with Walther Wever as Chief of Staff. The 1935 Luftwaffe doctrine for "Conduct of Air War" (*Luftkriegführung*) set air power within

the overall military strategy, with critical tasks of attaining (local and temporary) air superiority and providing battlefield support for army and naval forces. Strategic bombing of industries and transport could be decisive longer-term options, dependent on opportunity or preparations by the army and navy. It could be used to overcome a stalemate, or used when only destruction of the enemy's economy would be conclusive. The list excluded bombing civilians to destroy homes or undermine morale, as that was considered a waste of strategic effort, but the doctrine allowed revenge attacks if German civilians were bombed. A revised edition was issued in 1940, and the continuing central principle of Luftwaffe doctrine was that destruction of enemy armed forces was of primary importance.

The RAF responded to Luftwaffe developments with its 1934 Expansion Plan A rearmament scheme, and in 1936 it was restructured into Bomber Command, Coastal Command, Training Command and Fighter Command. The last was under Hugh Dowding, who opposed the doctrine that bombers were unstoppable: the invention of radar at that time could allow early detection, and prototype monoplane fighters were significantly faster. Priorities were disputed, but in December 1937, the Minister in charge of Defence Coordination, Sir Thomas Inskip, sided with Dowding that "The role of our air force is not an early knock-out blow" but rather was "to prevent the Germans from knocking us out" and fighter squadrons were just as necessary as bomber squadrons.

The Spanish Civil War gave the Luftwaffe Condor Legion the opportunity to test air fighting tactics with their new aeroplanes. Wolfram von Richthofen became an exponent of air

power providing ground support to other services. The difficulty of accurately hitting targets prompted Ernst Udet to require that all new bombers had to be dive bombers, and led to the development of the Knickebein system for night time navigation. Priority was given to producing large numbers of smaller aeroplanes, and plans for a long-range, four-engined strategic bomber were delayed.

## **First stages of the Second World War**

The early stages of the Second World War saw successful German invasions on the continent, aided decisively by the air power of the Luftwaffe, which was able to establish tactical air superiority with great effectiveness. The speed with which German forces defeated most of the defending armies in Norway in early 1940 created a significant political crisis in Britain. In early May 1940, the Norway Debate questioned the fitness for office of the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. On 10 May, the same day Winston Churchill became British Prime Minister, the Germans initiated the Battle of France with an aggressive invasion of French territory. RAF Fighter Command was desperately short of trained pilots and aircraft. Churchill sent fighter squadrons, the Air Component of the British Expeditionary Force, to support operations in France, where the RAF suffered heavy losses. This was despite the objections of its commander Hugh Dowding that the diversion of his forces would leave home defences under-strength.

After the evacuation of British and French soldiers from Dunkirk and the French surrender on 22 June 1940, Hitler mainly focused his energies on the possibility of invading the



Soviet Union. He believed that the British, defeated on the continent and without European allies, would quickly come to terms. The Germans were so convinced of an imminent armistice that they began constructing street decorations for the homecoming parades of victorious troops. Although the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Halifax, and certain elements of the British public favoured a negotiated peace with an ascendant Germany, Churchill and a majority of his Cabinet refused to consider an armistice. Instead, Churchill used his skilful rhetoric to harden public opinion against capitulation and prepare the British for a long war.

The Battle of Britain has the unusual distinction that it gained its name before being fought. The name is derived from the *This was their finest hour* speech delivered by Winston Churchill in the House of Commons on 18 June, more than three weeks prior to the generally accepted date for the start of the battle:

... What General Weygand called the Battle of France is over. I expect that the battle of Britain is about to begin. Upon this battle depends the survival of Christian civilisation. Upon it depends our own British life and the long continuity of our institutions and our Empire. The whole fury and might of the enemy must very soon be turned on us. Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war. If we can stand up to him, all Europe may be free and the life of the world may move forward into broad, sunlit uplands. But if we fail, then the whole world, including the United States, including all that we have known and cared for, will sink into the abyss of a new Dark Age made more sinister, and perhaps more protracted, by the lights of a perverted science. Let us

therefore brace ourselves to our duties, and so bear ourselves that, if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, "This was their finest hour".

- — *Winston Churchill*

### **German aims and directives**

From the outset of his rise to power, Adolf Hitler expressed admiration for Britain, and throughout the Battle period he sought neutrality or a peace treaty with Britain. In a secret conference on 23 May 1939, Hitler set out his rather contradictory strategy that an attack on Poland was essential and "will only be successful if the Western Powers keep out of it. If this is impossible, then it will be better to attack in the West and to settle Poland at the same time" with a surprise attack. "If Holland and Belgium are successfully occupied and held, and if France is also defeated, the fundamental conditions for a successful war against England will have been secured. England can then be blockaded from Western France at close quarters by the Air Force, while the Navy with its submarines extend the range of the blockade."

When war commenced, Hitler and the OKW (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* or "High Command of the Armed Forces") issued a series of Directives ordering, planning and stating strategic objectives. "Directive No. 1 for the Conduct of the War", dated 31 August 1939, instructed the invasion of Poland on 1 September as planned. Potentially, Luftwaffe "operations against England" were to "dislocate English imports, the armaments industry, and the transport of troops to France. Any favourable opportunity of an effective attack on

concentrated units of the English Navy, particularly on battleships or aircraft carriers, will be exploited. The decision regarding attacks on London is reserved to me. Attacks on the English homeland are to be prepared, bearing in mind that inconclusive results with insufficient forces are to be avoided in all circumstances." Both France and the UK declared war on Germany; on 9 October, Hitler's "Directive No. 6" planned the offensive to defeat these allies and "win as much territory as possible in the Netherlands, Belgium, and northern France to serve as a base for the successful prosecution of the air and sea war against England". On 29 November, OKW "Directive No. 9 - Instructions For Warfare Against The Economy Of The Enemy" stated that once this coastline had been secured, the Luftwaffe together with the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) was to blockade UK ports with sea mines. They were to attack shipping and warships and make air attacks on shore installations and industrial production. This directive remained in force in the first phase of the Battle of Britain. It was reinforced on 24 May during the Battle of France by "Directive No. 13", which authorised the Luftwaffe "to attack the English homeland in the fullest manner, as soon as sufficient forces are available. This attack will be opened by an annihilating reprisal for English attacks on the Ruhr Basin."

By the end of June 1940, Germany had defeated Britain's allies on the continent, and on 30 June the OKW Chief of Staff, Alfred Jodl, issued his review of options to increase pressure on Britain to agree to a negotiated peace. The first priority was to eliminate the RAF and gain air supremacy. Intensified air attacks against shipping and the economy could affect food supplies and civilian morale in the long term. Reprisal attacks of terror bombing had the potential to cause quicker

capitulation, but the effect on morale was uncertain. On the same day, the Luftwaffe Commander-in-Chief, Hermann Göring issued his operational directive: to destroy the RAF, thus protecting German industry, and also to block overseas supplies to Britain. The German Supreme Command argued over the practicality of these options.

In "Directive No. 16 – On preparations for a landing operation against England" on 16 July, Hitler required readiness by mid-August for the possibility of an invasion he called Operation Sea Lion, unless the British agreed to negotiations. The Luftwaffe reported that it would be ready to launch its major attack early in August. The Kriegsmarine Commander-in-Chief, Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, continued to highlight the impracticality of these plans and said sea invasion could not take place before early 1941. Hitler now argued that Britain was holding out in hope of assistance from Russia, and the Soviet Union was to be invaded by mid 1941. Göring met his air fleet commanders, and on 24 July issued "Tasks and Goals" of firstly gaining air supremacy, secondly protecting invasion forces and attacking the Royal Navy's ships. Thirdly, they were to blockade imports, bombing harbours and stores of supplies.

Hitler's "Directive No. 17 – For the conduct of air and sea warfare against England" issued on 1 August attempted to keep all the options open. The Luftwaffe's *Adlertag* campaign was to start around 5 August, subject to weather, with the aim of gaining air superiority over southern England as a necessary precondition of invasion, to give credibility to the threat and give Hitler the option of ordering the invasion. The intention was to incapacitate the RAF so much that the UK would feel open to air attack, and would begin peace negotiations. It was

also to isolate the UK and damage war production, beginning an effective blockade. Following severe Luftwaffe losses, Hitler agreed at a 14 September OKW conference that the air campaign was to intensify regardless of invasion plans. On 16 September, Göring gave the order for this change in strategy, to the first independent strategic bombing campaign.

## **Negotiated peace or neutrality**

Hitler's 1923 *Mein Kampf* mostly set out his hatreds: he only admired ordinary German World War I soldiers and Britain, which he saw as an ally against communism. In 1935 Hermann Göring welcomed news that Britain as a potential ally was rearming. In 1936 he promised assistance to defend the British Empire, asking only a free hand in Eastern Europe, and repeated this to Lord Halifax in 1937. That year, von Ribbentrop met Churchill with a similar proposal; when rebuffed, he told Churchill that interference with German domination would mean war. To Hitler's great annoyance, all his diplomacy failed to stop Britain from declaring war when he invaded Poland. During the fall of France, he repeatedly discussed peace efforts with his generals.

When Churchill came to power, there was still wide support for Halifax, who as Foreign Secretary openly argued for peace negotiations in the tradition of British diplomacy, to secure British independence without war. On 20 May, Halifax secretly requested a Swedish businessman to make contact with Göring to open negotiations. Shortly afterwards, in the May 1940 War Cabinet Crisis, Halifax argued for negotiations involving the Italians, but this was rejected by Churchill with majority support. An approach made through the Swedish ambassador

on 22 June was reported to Hitler, making peace negotiations seem feasible. Throughout July, as the battle started, the Germans made wider attempts to find a diplomatic solution. On 2 July, the day the armed forces were asked to start preliminary planning for an invasion, Hitler got von Ribbentrop to draft a speech offering peace negotiations. On 19 July Hitler made this speech to the German Parliament in Berlin, appealing "to reason and common sense", and said he could "see no reason why this war should go on". His sombre conclusion was received in silence, but he did not suggest negotiations and this was effectively an ultimatum which was rejected by the British government. Halifax kept trying to arrange peace until he was sent to Washington in December as ambassador, and in January 1941 Hitler expressed continued interest in negotiating peace with Britain.

### **Blockade and siege**

A May 1939 planning exercise by Luftflotte 3 found that the Luftwaffe lacked the means to do much damage to Britain's war economy beyond laying naval mines. The Head of Luftwaffe intelligence Joseph "Beppo" Schmid presented a report on 22 November 1939, stating that "Of all Germany's possible enemies, Britain is the most dangerous." This "Proposal for the Conduct of Air Warfare" argued for a counter to the British blockade and said "Key is to paralyse the British trade". Instead of the Wehrmacht attacking the French, the Luftwaffe with naval assistance was to block imports to Britain and attack seaports. "Should the enemy resort to terror measures – for example, to attack our towns in western Germany" they could retaliate by bombing industrial centres and London. Parts of this appeared on 29 November in "Directive No. 9" as

future actions once the coast had been conquered. On 24 May 1940 "Directive No. 13" authorised attacks on the blockade targets, as well as retaliation for RAF bombing of industrial targets in the Ruhr.

After the defeat of France, the OKW felt they had won the war, and some more pressure would persuade Britain. On 30 June the OKW Chief of Staff Alfred Jodl issued his paper setting out options: the first was to increase attacks on shipping, economic targets and the RAF: air attacks and food shortages were expected to break morale and lead to capitulation. Destruction of the RAF was the first priority, and invasion would be a last resort. Göring's operational directive issued the same day ordered the destruction of the RAF to clear the way for attacks cutting off seaborne supplies to Britain. It made no mention of invasion.

## **Invasion plans**

In November 1939, the OKW reviewed the potential for an air- and seaborne invasion of Britain: the Kriegsmarine (German Navy) was faced with the threat the Royal Navy's larger Home Fleet posed to a crossing of the English Channel, and together with the German Army viewed control of airspace as a necessary precondition.

The German navy thought air superiority alone was insufficient; the German naval staff had already produced a study (in 1939) on the possibility of an invasion of Britain and concluded that it also required naval superiority. The Luftwaffe said invasion could only be "the final act in an already victorious war."

Hitler first discussed the idea of an invasion at a 21 May 1940 meeting with Grand Admiral Erich Raeder, who stressed the difficulties and his own preference for a blockade. OKW Chief of Staff Jodl's 30 June report described invasion as a last resort once the British economy had been damaged and the Luftwaffe had full air superiority. On 2 July, OKW requested preliminary plans. In Britain, Churchill described "the great invasion scare" as "serving a very useful purpose" by "keeping every man and woman tuned to a high pitch of readiness". On 10 July he advised the War Cabinet that invasion could be ignored, as it "would be a most hazardous and suicidal operation".

On 11 July Hitler agreed with Raeder that invasion would be a last resort, and the Luftwaffe advised that gaining air superiority would take 14 to 28 days. Hitler met his army chiefs, von Brauchitsch and Halder at the Berchtesgaden on 13 July where they presented detailed plans on the assumption that the navy would provide safe transport. Von Brauchitsch and Halder were surprised that Hitler took no interest in the invasion plans, unlike his usual attitude toward military operations (Bishop "Battle of Britain" p105), but on 16 July he issued Directive No. 16 ordering preparations for Operation Sea Lion.

The navy insisted on a narrow beachhead and an extended period for landing troops; the army rejected these plans: the Luftwaffe could begin an air attack in August. Hitler held a meeting of his army and navy chiefs on 31 July. The navy said 22 September was the earliest possible date and proposed postponement until the following year, but Hitler preferred September. He then told von Brauchitsch and Halder that he



would decide on the landing operation eight to fourteen days after the air attack began. On 1 August he issued Directive No. 17 for intensified air and sea warfare, to begin with *Adlertag* on or after 5 August subject to weather, keeping options open for negotiated peace or blockade and siege.

### **Independent air attack**

Under the continuing influence of the 1935 "Conduct of the Air War" doctrine, the main focus of the Luftwaffe command (including Göring) was in concentrating attacks to destroy enemy armed forces on the battlefield, and "blitzkrieg" close air support of the army succeeded brilliantly. They reserved strategic bombing for a stalemate situation or revenge attacks, but doubted if this could be decisive on its own and regarded bombing civilians to destroy homes or undermine morale as a waste of strategic effort.

The defeat of France in June 1940 introduced the prospect for the first time of independent air action against Britain. A July *Fliegercorps I* paper asserted that Germany was by definition an air power: "Its chief weapon against England is the Air Force, then the Navy, followed by the landing forces and the Army." In 1940, the Luftwaffe would undertake a "*strategic offensive* ... on its own and independent of the other services", according to an April 1944 German account of their military mission. Göring was convinced that strategic bombing could win objectives that were beyond the army and navy, and gain political advantages in the Third Reich for the Luftwaffe and himself. He expected air warfare to decisively force Britain to negotiate, as all in the OKW hoped, and the Luftwaffe took little interest in planning to support an invasion.

## **Opposing forces**

The Luftwaffe faced a more capable opponent than any it had previously met: a sizeable, highly coordinated, well-supplied, modern air force.

### **Fighters**

- he Luftwaffe's Messerschmitt Bf 109E and Bf 110C fought against the RAF's workhorse Hurricane Mk I and the less numerous Spitfire Mk I; Hurricanes outnumbered Spitfires in RAF Fighter Command by about 2:1 when war broke out. The Bf 109E had a better climb rate and was up to 40 mph faster in level flight than the Rotol (constant speed propeller) equipped Hurricane Mk I, depending on altitude. The speed and climb disparity with the original non-Rotol Hurricane was even greater. By mid-1940, all RAF Spitfire and Hurricane fighter squadrons converted to 100 octane aviation fuel, which allowed their Merlin engines to generate significantly more power and an approximately 30 mph increase in speed at low altitudes through the use of an Emergency Boost Override. In September 1940, the more powerful Mk IIa series 1 Hurricanes started entering service in small numbers. This version was capable of a maximum speed of 342 mph (550 km/h), some 20 mph more than the original (non-Rotol) Mk I, though it was still 15 to 20 mph slower than a Bf 109 (depending on altitude).

The performance of the Spitfire over Dunkirk came as a surprise to the *Jagdwaaffe*, although the German pilots retained a strong belief that the 109 was the superior fighter. The British fighters were equipped with eight Browning .303 (7.7mm) machine guns, while most Bf 109Es had two 20mm cannons supplemented by two 7.92mm machine guns.

The former was much more effective than the .303; during the Battle it was not unknown for damaged German bombers to limp home with up to two hundred .303 hits.

At some altitudes, the Bf 109 could outclimb the British fighter. It could also engage in vertical-plane negative-g manoeuvres without the engine cutting out because its DB 601 engine used fuel injection; this allowed the 109 to dive away from attackers more readily than the carburettor-equipped Merlin. On the other hand, the Bf 109E had a much larger turning circle than its two foes. In general, though, as Alfred Price noted in *The Spitfire Story*:

... the differences between the Spitfire and the Me 109 in performance and handling were only marginal, and in a combat they were almost always surmounted by tactical considerations of which side had seen the other first, which had the advantage of sun, altitude, numbers, pilot ability, tactical situation, tactical co-ordination, amount of fuel remaining, etc.

The Bf 109E was also used as a *Jabo* (*jagdbomber*, fighter-bomber) – the E-4/B and E-7 models could carry a 250 kg bomb underneath the fuselage, the later model arriving during

the battle. The Bf 109, unlike the *Stuka*, could fight on equal terms with RAF fighters after releasing its ordnance.

At the start of the battle, the twin-engined Messerschmitt Bf 110C long-range *Zerstörer* ("Destroyer") was also expected to engage in air-to-air combat while escorting the Luftwaffe bomber fleet.

Although the 110 was faster than the Hurricane and almost as fast as the Spitfire, its lack of manoeuvrability and acceleration meant that it was a failure as a long-range escort fighter. On 13 and 15 August, thirteen and thirty aircraft were lost, the equivalent of an entire *Gruppe*, and the type's worst losses during the campaign. This trend continued with a further eight and fifteen lost on 16 and 17 August.

The most successful role of the Bf 110 during the battle was as a *Schnellbomber* (fast bomber). The Bf 110 usually used a shallow dive to bomb the target and escape at high speed. One unit, *Erprobungsgruppe 210* – initially formed as the service test unit (*Erprobungskommando*) for the emerging successor to the 110, the Me 210 – proved that the Bf 110 could still be used to good effect in attacking small or "pinpoint" targets.

The RAF's Boulton Paul Defiant had some initial success over Dunkirk because of its resemblance to the Hurricane; Luftwaffe fighters attacking from the rear were surprised by its unusual gun turret. During the Battle of Britain, it proved hopelessly outclassed. For various reasons, the Defiant lacked any form of forward-firing armament, and the heavy turret and second crewman meant it could not outrun or outmanoeuvre either the Bf 109 or Bf 110. By the end of August, after disastrous losses, the aircraft was withdrawn from daylight service.

## Bombers

The Luftwaffe's primary bombers were the Heinkel He 111, Dornier Do 17, and Junkers Ju 88 for level bombing at medium to high altitudes, and the Junkers Ju 87 *Stuka* for dive-bombing tactics. The He 111 was used in greater numbers than the others during the conflict, and was better known, partly due to its distinctive wing shape. Each level bomber also had a few reconnaissance versions accompanying them that were used during the battle.

Although it had been successful in previous Luftwaffe engagements, the *Stuka* suffered heavy losses in the Battle of Britain, particularly on 18 August, due to its slow speed and vulnerability to fighter interception after dive-bombing a target. As the losses went up along with their limited payload and range, *Stuka* units were largely removed from operations over England and diverted to concentrate on shipping instead until they were eventually re-deployed to the Eastern Front in 1941. For some raids, they were called back, such as on 13 September to attack Tangmere airfield.

The remaining three bomber types differed in their capabilities; the Dornier Do 17 was the slowest and had the smallest bomb load; the Ju 88 was the fastest once its mainly external bomb load was dropped; and the He 111 had the largest (internal) bomb load. All three bomber types suffered heavy losses from the home-based British fighters, but the Ju 88 had significantly lower loss rates due to its greater speed and its ability to dive out of trouble (it was originally designed as a dive bomber). The German bombers required constant protection by the Luftwaffe's fighter force. German escorts were

not sufficiently numerous. Bf 109Es were ordered to support more than 300–400 bombers on any given day. Later in the conflict, when night bombing became more frequent, all three were used. Due to its smaller bomb load, the lighter Do 17 was used less than the He 111 and Ju 88 for this purpose.

On the British side, three bomber types were mostly used on night operations against targets such as factories, invasion ports and railway centres; the Armstrong Whitworth Whitley, the Handley-Page Hampden and the Vickers Wellington were classified as heavy bombers by the RAF, although the Hampden was a medium bomber comparable to the He 111. The twin-engined Bristol Blenheim and the obsolescent single-engined Fairey Battle were both light bombers; the Blenheim was the most numerous of the aircraft equipping RAF Bomber Command and was used in attacks against shipping, ports, airfields and factories on the continent by day and by night. The Fairey Battle squadrons, which had suffered heavy losses in daylight attacks during the Battle of France, were brought up to strength with reserve aircraft and continued to operate at night in attacks against the invasion ports, until the Battle was withdrawn from UK front line service in October 1940.

## **Pilots**

Before the war, the RAF's processes for selecting potential candidates were opened to men of all social classes through the creation in 1936 of the RAF Volunteer Reserve, which "... was designed to appeal, to ... young men ... without any class distinctions ..." The older squadrons of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force did retain some of their upper-class exclusiveness, but their numbers were soon swamped by the

newcomers of the RAFVR; by 1 September 1939, 6,646 pilots had been trained through the RAFVR.

By mid-1940, there were about 9,000 pilots in the RAF to man about 5,000 aircraft, most of which were bombers. Fighter Command was never short of pilots, but the problem of finding sufficient numbers of fully trained fighter pilots became acute by mid-August 1940. With aircraft production running at 300 planes each week, only 200 pilots were trained in the same period.

In addition, more pilots were allocated to squadrons than there were aircraft, as this allowed squadrons to maintain operational strength despite casualties and still provide for pilot leave. Another factor was that only about 30% of the 9,000 pilots were assigned to operational squadrons; 20% of the pilots were involved in conducting pilot training, and a further 20% were undergoing further instruction, like those offered in Canada and in Southern Rhodesia to the Commonwealth trainees, although already qualified. The rest were assigned to staff positions, since RAF policy dictated that only pilots could make many staff and operational command decisions, even in engineering matters. At the height of the fighting, and despite Churchill's insistence, only 30 pilots were released to the front line from administrative duties.

For these reasons, and the permanent loss of 435 pilots during the Battle of France alone along with many more wounded, and others lost in Norway, the RAF had fewer experienced pilots at the start of the initial defence of their home. It was the lack of trained pilots in the fighting squadrons, rather than the lack of aircraft, that became the greatest concern for Air Chief

Marshal Hugh Dowding, Commander of Fighter Command. Drawing from regular RAF forces, the Auxiliary Air Force and the Volunteer Reserve, the British were able to muster some 1,103 fighter pilots on 1 July. Replacement pilots, with little flight training and often no gunnery training, suffered high casualty rates, thus exacerbating the problem.

The Luftwaffe, on the other hand, were able to muster a larger number (1,450) of more experienced fighter pilots. Drawing from a cadre of Spanish Civil War veterans, these pilots already had comprehensive courses in aerial gunnery and instructions in tactics suited for fighter-versus-fighter combat. Training manuals discouraged heroism, stressing the importance of attacking only when the odds were in the pilot's favour. Despite the high levels of experience, German fighter formations did not provide a sufficient reserve of pilots to allow for losses and leave, and the Luftwaffe was unable to produce enough pilots to prevent a decline in operational strength as the battle progressed.

## **International participation**

### **Allies**

About 20% of pilots who took part in the battle were from non-British countries. The Royal Air Force roll of honour for the Battle of Britain recognises 595 non-British pilots (out of 2,936) as flying at least one authorised operational sortie with an eligible unit of the RAF or Fleet Air Arm between 10 July and 31 October 1940. These included 145 Poles, 127 New Zealanders, 112 Canadians, 88 Czechoslovaks, 10 Irish, 32 Australians, 28 Belgians, 25 South Africans, 13 French, 9



Americans, 3 Southern Rhodesians and individuals from Jamaica, Barbados and Newfoundland "Altogether in the fighter battles, the bombing raids, and the various patrols flown between 10 July and 31 October 1940 by the Royal Air Force, 1495 aircrew were killed, of whom 449 were fighter pilots, 718 aircrew from Bomber Command, and 280 from Coastal Command.

Among those killed were 47 airmen from Canada, 24 from Australia, 17 from South Africa, 30 from Poland, 20 from Czechoslovakia and six from Belgium. Forty-seven New Zealanders lost their lives, including 15 fighter pilots, 24 bomber and eight coastal aircrew. The names of these Allied and Commonwealth airmen are inscribed in a memorial book that rests in the Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey. In the chapel is a stained glass window which contains the badges of the fighter squadrons which operated during the battle and the flags of the nations to which the pilots and aircrew belonged."

These pilots, some of whom had to flee their home countries because of German invasions, fought with distinction. The No. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron for example was not just the highest scoring of Hurricane squadron, but also had the highest ratio of enemy aircraft destroyed relative to their own losses.

"Had it not been for the magnificent material contributed by the Polish squadrons and their unsurpassed gallantry," wrote Air Chief Marshal Hugh Dowding, head of RAF Fighter Command, "I hesitate to say that the outcome of the Battle would have been the same."

## Axis

An element of the Italian Royal Air Force (*RegiaAeronautica*) called the Italian Air Corps (*CorpoAereoItaliano* or CAI) first saw action in late October 1940. It took part in the latter stages of the battle but achieved limited success. The unit was redeployed in early 1941.

## Luftwaffe strategy

The indecision of OKL over what to do was reflected in shifts in *Luftwaffe* strategy. The doctrine of concentrated close air support of the army at the battlefield succeeded against Poland, Denmark and Norway, the Low Countries and France but incurred significant losses. The *Luftwaffe* had to build or repair bases in the conquered territories, and rebuild their strength. In June 1940 they began regular armed reconnaissance flights and sporadic *Störangriffe*, nuisance raids of one or a few bombers by day and night. These gave crews practice in navigation and avoiding air defences and set off air raid alarms which disturbed civilian morale. Similar nuisance raids continued throughout the battle, into late 1940. Scattered naval mine-laying sorties began at the outset and increased gradually over the battle period.

Göring's operational directive of 30 June ordered the destruction of the RAF, including the aircraft industry, to end RAF bombing raids on Germany and facilitating attacks on ports and storage in the *Luftwaffe* blockade of Britain. Attacks on Channel shipping in the *Kanalkampf* began on 4 July, and were formalised on 11 July in an order by Hans Jeschonnek

which added the arms industry as a target. On 16 July, Directive No. 16 ordered preparations for Operation Sea Lion and on the next day the *Luftwaffe* was ordered to stand by in full readiness. Göring met his air fleet commanders and on 24 July issued orders for the gaining air supremacy, protecting the army and navy if the invasion went ahead and attacking Royal Navy ships and continuing the blockade. Once the RAF had been defeated, *Luftwaffe* bombers were to move forward beyond London without the need for fighter escort, destroying military and economic targets.

At a meeting on 1 August the command reviewed plans produced by each *Fliegerkorps* with differing proposals for targets including whether to bomb airfields but failed to decide a priority. Intelligence reports gave Göring the impression that the RAF was almost defeated, raids would attract British fighters for the *Luftwaffe* to shoot down. On 6 August he finalised plans for *Adlertag* (Eagle Day) with Kesselring, Sperrle and Stumpff; the destruction of RAF Fighter Command in the south of England was to take four days, with lightly escorted small bomber raids leaving the main fighter force free to attack RAF fighters. Bombing of military and economic targets was then to systematically extend up to the Midlands until daylight attacks could proceed unhindered over the whole of Britain.

Bombing of London was to be held back while these night time "destroyer" attacks proceeded over other urban areas, then, in the culmination of the campaign, a major attack on the capital was intended to cause a crisis, with refugees fleeing London just as Operation Sea Lion was to begin. With hopes fading for the possibility of invasion, on 4 September Hitler authorised a

main focus on day and night attacks on tactical targets, with London as the main target, which became known as the Blitz. With increasing difficulty in defending bombers in day raids, the *Luftwaffe* shifted to a strategic bombing campaign of night raids aiming to overcome British resistance by damaging infrastructure and food stocks, though intentional terror bombing of civilians was not sanctioned.

### **Regrouping of *Luftwaffe* in *Luftflotten***

The *Luftwaffe* regrouped after the Battle of France into three *Luftflotten* (Air Fleets) opposite Britain's southern and eastern coasts. *Luftflotte 2* (*Generalfeldmarschall* Albert Kesselring), was responsible for the bombing of south-east England and the London area. *Luftflotte 3* (*Generalfeldmarschall* Hugo Sperrle) concentrated on the West Country, Wales, the Midlands and north-west England. *Luftflotte 5* (*Generaloberst* Hans-Jürgen Stumpff) from his headquarters in Norway, attacked the north of England and Scotland. As the battle progressed, command responsibility shifted, with *Luftflotte 3* taking more responsibility for the night bombing and the main daylight operations fell upon *Luftflotte 2*.

Initial *Luftwaffe* estimates were that it would take four days to defeat the RAF Fighter Command in southern England. This would be followed by a four-week offensive during which the bombers and long-range fighters would destroy all military installations throughout the country and wreck the British aircraft industry. The campaign was planned to begin with attacks on airfields near the coast, gradually moving inland to attack the ring of sector airfields defending London. Later reassessments gave the *Luftwaffe* five weeks, from 8 August to

15 September, to establish temporary air superiority over England. To achieve this goal, Fighter Command had to be destroyed, either on the ground or in the air, yet the *Luftwaffe* had to preserve its strength to be able to support the invasion; the *Luftwaffe* had to maintain a high "kill ratio" over the RAF fighters. The only alternative to the goal of air superiority was a terror bombing campaign aimed at the civilian population but this was considered a last resort and it was forbidden by Hitler. The *Luftwaffe* kept broadly to this scheme but its commanders had differences of opinion on strategy. Sperrle wanted to eradicate the air defence infrastructure by bombing it. Kesselring, championed attacking London directly – either to bombard the British government into submission or to draw RAF fighters into a decisive battle. Göring did nothing to resolve this disagreement between his commanders and gave only vague directives during the initial stages of the battle, with Göring seemingly unable to decide upon which strategy to pursue.

## **Tactics**

### **Fighter formations**

Luftwaffe formations employed a loose section of two (nicknamed the *Rotte* [pack]), based on a leader (*Rottenführer*) followed at a distance of about 200 m (220 yd) by his wingman, *Rottenhund* pack dog or *Katschmarek*, the turning radius of a Bf 109, enabling both aircraft to turn together at high speed. The *Katschmarek* flew slightly higher and was trained always to stay with his leader. With more room between them, both could spend less time maintaining formation and more time looking around and covering each other's blind spots. Attacking

aircraft could be sandwiched between the two 109s. The formation was developed from principles formulated by the First World War ace Oswald Boelcke in 1916. In 1934 the Finnish Air Force adopted similar formations, called *partio* (patrol; two aircraft) and *parvi* (two patrols; four aircraft), for similar reasons, though *Luftwaffe* pilots during the Spanish Civil War (led by Günther Lützow and Werner Mölders, among others) are generally given credit. The *Rotte* allowed the *Rottenführer* to concentrate on shooting down aircraft but few wingmen had the chance, leading to some resentment in the lower ranks where it was felt that the high scores came at their expense. Two *Rotten* combined as a *Schwarm*, where all the pilots could watch what was happening around them. Each *Schwarm* in a *Staffel* flew at staggered heights and with about 200 m (220 yd) between them, making the formation difficult to spot at longer ranges and allowing for a great deal of flexibility. By using a tight "cross-over" turn, a *Schwarm* could quickly change direction.

The Bf 110s adopted the same *Schwarm* formation as the 109s but were seldom able to use this to the same advantage. The Bf 110's most successful method of attack was the "bounce" from above. When attacked, *Zerstörergruppen* increasingly resorted to forming large defensive circles, where each Bf 110 guarded the tail of the aircraft ahead of it. Göring ordered that they be renamed "offensive circles" in a vain bid to improve rapidly declining morale. These conspicuous formations were often successful in attracting RAF fighters that were sometimes "bounced" by high-flying Bf 109s. This led to the often repeated misconception that the Bf 110s were escorted by Bf 109s.

## Higher-level dispositions

*Luftwaffe* tactics were influenced by their fighters. The Bf 110 proved too vulnerable against the nimble single-engined RAF fighters and the bulk of fighter escort duties devolved to the Bf 109. Fighter tactics were then complicated by bomber crews who demanded closer protection. After the hard-fought battles of 15 and 18 August, Göring met his unit leaders. The need for the fighters to meet up on time with the bombers was stressed. It was also decided that one bomber *Gruppe* could only be properly protected by several *Gruppen* of 109s. Göring stipulated that as many fighters as possible were to be left free for *FreieJagd* ("Free Hunts": a free-roving fighter sweep preceded a raid to try to sweep defenders out of the raid's path). The Ju 87 units, which had suffered heavy casualties, were only to be used under favourable circumstances. In early September, due to increasing complaints from the bomber crews about RAF fighters seemingly able to get through the escort screen, Göring ordered an increase in close escort duties. This decision shackled many of the Bf 109s to the bombers and although they were more successful at protecting the bombers, casualties amongst the fighters mounted primarily because they were forced to fly and manoeuvre at reduced speeds.

The *Luftwaffe* varied its tactics to break Fighter Command. It launched many *FreieJagd* to draw up RAF fighters. RAF fighter controllers were often able to detect these and position squadrons to avoid them, keeping to Dowding's plan to preserve fighter strength for the bomber formations. The *Luftwaffe* also tried using small formations of bombers as bait, covering them with large numbers of escorts. This was more

successful but escort duty tied the fighters tied to the slower bombers making them more vulnerable.

- By September, standard tactics for raids had become an amalgam of techniques. A *FreieJagd* would precede the main attack formations. The bombers would fly in at altitudes between 5,000 and 6,000 m (16,000 and 20,000 ft), closely escorted by fighters. Escorts were divided into two parts (usually *Gruppen*), some operating close to the bombers and others a few hundred yards away and a little above. If the formation was attacked from the starboard, the starboard section engaged the attackers, the top section moving to starboard and the port section to the top position. If the attack came from the port side the system was reversed. British fighters coming from the rear were engaged by the rear section and the two outside sections similarly moving to the rear. If the threat came from above, the top section went into action while the side sections gained height to be able to follow RAF fighters down as they broke away. If attacked, all sections flew in defensive circles. These tactics were skilfully evolved and carried out and were difficult to counter.

Adolf Galland noted:

We had the impression that, whatever we did, we were bound to be wrong. Fighter protection for bombers created many problems which had to be solved in action. Bomber pilots preferred close screening in which their formation was surrounded



by pairs of fighters pursuing a zigzag course. Obviously, the visible presence of the protective fighters gave the bomber pilots a greater sense of security. However, this was a faulty conclusion, because a fighter can only carry out this purely defensive task by taking the initiative in the offensive. He must never wait until attacked because he then loses the chance of acting. We fighter pilots certainly preferred the free chase during the approach and over the target area. This gives the greatest relief and the best protection for the bomber force.

The biggest disadvantage faced by Bf 109 pilots was that without the benefit of long-range drop tanks (which were introduced in limited numbers in the late stages of the battle), usually of 300 l (66 imp gal; 79 US gal) capacity, the 109s had an endurance of just over an hour and, for the 109E, a 600 km (370 mi) range. Once over Britain, a 109 pilot had to keep an eye on a red "low fuel" light on the instrument panel: once this was illuminated, he was forced to turn back and head for France. With the prospect of two long flights over water and knowing their range was substantially reduced when escorting bombers or during combat, the *Jagdflieger* coined the term *Kanalkrankheit* or "Channel sickness".

## **Intelligence**

The Luftwaffe was ill-served by its lack of military intelligence about the British defences. The German intelligence services were fractured and plagued by rivalry; their performance was "amateurish". By 1940, there were few German agents

operating in Great Britain and a handful of bungled attempts to insert spies into the country were foiled.

As a result of intercepted radio transmissions, the Germans began to realise that the RAF fighters were being controlled from ground facilities; in July and August 1939, for example, the airship *Graf Zeppelin*, which was packed with equipment for listening in on RAF radio and RDF transmissions, flew around the coasts of Britain. Although the Luftwaffe correctly interpreted these new ground control procedures, they were incorrectly assessed as being rigid and ineffectual. A British radar system was well known to the Luftwaffe from intelligence gathered before the war, but the highly developed "Dowding system" linked with fighter control had been a well-kept secret. Even when good information existed, such as a November 1939 *Abwehr* assessment of Fighter Command strengths and capabilities by *Abteilung V*, it was ignored if it did not match conventional preconceptions.

On 16 July 1940, *Abteilung V*, commanded by *Oberstleutnant* "Beppo" Schmid, produced a report on the RAF and on Britain's defensive capabilities which was adopted by the frontline commanders as a basis for their operational plans. One of the most conspicuous failures of the report was the lack of information on the RAF's RDF network and control systems capabilities; it was assumed that the system was rigid and inflexible, with the RAF fighters being "tied" to their home bases. An optimistic and, as it turned out, erroneous conclusion reached was:

**D. Supply Situation...** At present the British aircraft industry produces about 180 to 300 first line fighters and 140 first line

bombers a month. In view of the present conditions relating to production (the appearance of raw material difficulties, the disruption or breakdown of production at factories owing to air attacks, the increased vulnerability to air attack owing to the fundamental reorganisation of the aircraft industry now in progress), it is believed that for the time being output will decrease rather than increase. In the event of an intensification of air warfare it is expected that the present strength of the RAF will fall, and this decline will be aggravated by the continued decrease in production.

Because of this statement, reinforced by another more detailed report, issued on 10 August, there was a mindset in the ranks of the Luftwaffe that the RAF would run out of frontline fighters. The Luftwaffe believed it was weakening Fighter Command at three times the actual attrition rate. Many times, the leadership believed Fighter Command's strength had collapsed, only to discover that the RAF were able to send up defensive formations at will.

Throughout the battle, the Luftwaffe had to use numerous reconnaissance sorties to make up for the poor intelligence. Reconnaissance aircraft (initially mostly Dornier Do 17s, but increasingly Bf 110s) proved easy prey for British fighters, as it was seldom possible for them to be escorted by Bf 109s. Thus, the Luftwaffe operated "blind" for much of the battle, unsure of its enemy's true strengths, capabilities, and deployments. Many of the Fighter Command airfields were never attacked, while raids against supposed fighter airfields fell instead on bomber or coastal defence stations. The results of bombing and air fighting were consistently exaggerated, due to inaccurate claims, over-enthusiastic reports and the difficulty of

confirmation over enemy territory. In the euphoric atmosphere of perceived victory, the Luftwaffe leadership became increasingly disconnected from reality. This lack of leadership and solid intelligence meant the Germans did not adopt a consistent strategy, even when the RAF had its back to the wall. Moreover, there was never a systematic focus on one type of target (such as airbases, radar stations, or aircraft factories); consequently, the already haphazard effort was further diluted.

### **Navigational aids**

While the British were using radar for air defence more effectively than the Germans realised, the Luftwaffe attempted to press its own offensive with advanced radio navigation systems of which the British were initially not aware. One of these was *Knickebein* ("bent leg"); this system was used at night and for raids where precision was required. It was rarely used during the Battle of Britain.

### **Air-sea rescue**

The Luftwaffe was much better prepared for the task of air-sea rescue than the RAF, specifically tasking the *Seenotdienst* unit, equipped with about 30 Heinkel He 59 floatplanes, with picking up downed aircrew from the North Sea, English Channel and the Dover Straits. In addition, Luftwaffe aircraft were equipped with life rafts and the aircrew were provided with sachets of a chemical called fluorescein which, on reacting with water, created a large, easy-to-see, bright green patch. In accordance with the Geneva Convention, the He 59s were unarmed and painted white with civilian registration markings and red

crosses. Nevertheless, RAF aircraft attacked these aircraft, as some were escorted by Bf 109s.

After single He 59s were forced to land on the sea by RAF fighters, on 1 and 9 July respectively, a controversial order was issued to the RAF on 13 July; this stated that from 20 July, *Seenotdienst* aircraft were to be shot down. One of the reasons given by Churchill was:

We did not recognise this means of rescuing enemy pilots so they could come and bomb our civil population again ... all German air ambulances were forced down or shot down by our fighters on definite orders approved by the War Cabinet.

The British also believed that their crews would report on convoys, the Air Ministry issuing a communiqué to the German government on 14 July that Britain was

unable, however, to grant immunity to such aircraft flying over areas in which operations are in progress on land or at sea, or approaching British or Allied territory, or territory in British occupation, or British or Allied ships. Ambulance aircraft which do not comply with the above will do so at their own risk and peril

The white He 59s were soon repainted in camouflage colours and armed with defensive machine guns. Although another four He 59s were shot down by RAF aircraft, the *Seenotdienst* continued to pick up downed Luftwaffe and Allied aircrew throughout the battle, earning praise from Adolf Galland for their bravery.

# **RAF strategy**

## **The Dowding system**

During early tests of the Chain Home system, the slow flow of information from the CH radars and observers to the aircraft often caused them to miss their "bandits". The solution, today known as the "Dowding system", was to create a set of reporting chains to move information from the various observation points to the pilots in their fighters. It was named after its chief architect, "Stuffy" Dowding.

Reports from CH radars and the Observer Corps were sent directly to Fighter Command Headquarters (FCHQ) at Bentley Priory where they were "filtered" to combine multiple reports of the same formations into single tracks. Telephone operators would then forward only the information of interest to the Group headquarters, where the map would be re-created. This process was repeated to produce another version of the map at the Sector level, covering a much smaller area. Looking over their maps, Group level commanders could select squadrons to attack particular targets. From that point, the Sector operators would give commands to the fighters to arrange an interception, as well as return them to base. Sector stations also controlled the anti-aircraft batteries in their area; an army officer sat beside each fighter controller and directed the gun crews when to open and cease fire.

The Dowding system dramatically improved the speed and accuracy of the information that flowed to the pilots. During the early war period, it was expected that an average

interception mission might have a 30% chance of ever seeing their target. During the battle, the Dowding system maintained an average rate over 75%, with several examples of 100% rates – every fighter dispatched found and intercepted its target. In contrast, Luftwaffe fighters attempting to intercept raids had to randomly seek their targets and often returned home having never seen enemy aircraft. The result is what is now known as an example of "force multiplication"; RAF fighters were as effective as two or more Luftwaffe fighters, greatly offsetting, or overturning, the disparity in actual numbers.

## **Intelligence**

While Luftwaffe intelligence reports underestimated British fighter forces and aircraft production, the British intelligence estimates went the other way: they overestimated German aircraft production, numbers and range of aircraft available, and numbers of Luftwaffe pilots. In action, the Luftwaffe believed from their pilot claims and the impression given by aerial reconnaissance that the RAF was close to defeat, and the British made strenuous efforts to overcome the perceived advantages held by their opponents.

It is unclear how much the British intercepts of the Enigma cipher, used for high-security German radio communications, affected the battle. Ultra, the information obtained from Enigma intercepts, gave the highest echelons of the British command a view of German intentions. According to F. W. Winterbotham, who was the senior Air Staff representative in the Secret Intelligence Service, Ultra helped establish the strength and composition of the Luftwaffe's formations, the aims of the commanders and provided early warning of some

raids. In early August it was decided that a small unit would be set up at FCHQ, which would process the flow of information from Bletchley and provide Dowding only with the most essential Ultra material; thus the Air Ministry did not have to send a continual flow of information to FCHQ, preserving secrecy, and Dowding was not inundated with non-essential information. Keith Park and his controllers were also told about Ultra. In a further attempt to camouflage the existence of Ultra, Dowding created a unit named No. 421 (Reconnaissance) Flight RAF. This unit (which later became No. 91 Squadron RAF), was equipped with Hurricanes and Spitfires and sent out aircraft to search for and report Luftwaffe formations approaching England. In addition, the radio listening service (known as Y Service), monitoring the patterns of Luftwaffe radio traffic contributed considerably to the early warning of raids.

## **Tactics**

### **Fighter formations**

In the late 1930s, Fighter Command expected to face only bombers over Britain, not single-engined fighters. A series of "Fighting Area Tactics" were formulated and rigidly adhered to, involving a series of manoeuvres designed to concentrate a squadron's firepower to bring down bombers. RAF fighters flew in tight, v-shaped sections ("vics") of three aircraft, with four such "sections" in tight formation. Only the squadron leader at the front was free to watch for the enemy; the other pilots had to concentrate on keeping station. Training also emphasised by-the-book attacks by sections breaking away in sequence. Fighter Command recognised the weaknesses of this structure



early in the battle, but it was felt too risky to change tactics during the battle because replacement pilots – often with only minimal flying time – could not be readily retrained, and inexperienced pilots needed firm leadership in the air only rigid formations could provide. German pilots dubbed the RAF formations *Idiotenreihen* ("rows of idiots") because they left squadrons vulnerable to attack.

Front line RAF pilots were acutely aware of the inherent deficiencies of their own tactics. A compromise was adopted whereby squadron formations used much looser formations with one or two "weavers" flying independently above and behind to provide increased observation and rear protection; these tended to be the least experienced men and were often the first to be shot down without the other pilots even noticing that they were under attack. During the battle, 74 Squadron under Squadron Leader Adolph "Sailor" Malan adopted a variation of the German formation called the "fours in line astern", which was a vast improvement on the old three aircraft "vic". Malan's formation was later generally used by Fighter Command.

### **Squadron- and higher-level deployment**

The weight of the battle fell upon 11 Group. Keith Park's tactics were to dispatch individual squadrons to intercept raids. The intention was to subject incoming bombers to continual attacks by relatively small numbers of fighters and try to break up the tight German formations. Once formations had fallen apart, stragglers could be picked off one by one. Where multiple squadrons reached a raid the procedure was for the slower Hurricanes to tackle the bombers while the more

agile Spitfires held up the fighter escort. This ideal was not always achieved, resulting in occasions when Spitfires and Hurricanes reversed roles. Park also issued instructions to his units to engage in frontal attacks against the bombers, which were more vulnerable to such attacks. Again, in the environment of fast-moving, three-dimensional air battles, few RAF fighter units were able to attack the bombers from head-on.

During the battle, some commanders, notably Leigh-Mallory, proposed squadrons be formed into "Big Wings," consisting of at least three squadrons, to attack the enemy *en masse*, a method pioneered by Douglas Bader.

Proponents of this tactic claimed interceptions in large numbers caused greater enemy losses while reducing their own casualties. Opponents pointed out the big wings would take too long to form up, and the strategy ran a greater risk of fighters being caught on the ground refuelling. The big wing idea also caused pilots to overclaim their kills, due to the confusion of a more intense battle zone. This led to the belief big wings were far more effective than they actually were.

The issue caused intense friction between Park and Leigh-Mallory, as 12 Group was tasked with protecting 11 Group's airfields whilst Park's squadrons intercepted incoming raids. The delay in forming up Big Wings meant the formations often did not arrive at all or until after German bombers had hit 11 Group's airfields. Dowding, to highlight the problem of the Big Wing's performance, submitted a report compiled by Park to the Air Ministry on 15 November. In the report, he highlighted that during the period of 11 September – 31 October, the

extensive use of the Big Wing had resulted in just 10 interceptions and one German aircraft destroyed, but his report was ignored. Post-war analysis agrees Dowding and Park's approach was best for 11 Group.

Dowding's removal from his post in November 1940 has been blamed on this struggle between Park and Leigh-Mallory's daylight strategy. The intensive raids and destruction wrought during the Blitz damaged both Dowding and Park in particular, for the failure to produce an effective night-fighter defence system, something for which the influential Leigh-Mallory had long criticised them.

### **Bomber and Coastal Command contributions**

Bomber Command and Coastal Command aircraft flew offensive sorties against targets in Germany and France during the battle. An hour after the declaration of war, Bomber Command launched raids on warships and naval ports by day, and in night raids dropped leaflets as it was considered illegal to bomb targets which could affect civilians. After the initial disasters of the war, with Vickers Wellington bombers shot down in large numbers attacking Wilhelmshaven and the slaughter of the Fairey Battle squadrons sent to France, it became clear that they would have to operate mainly at night to avoid incurring very high losses. Churchill came to power on 10 May 1940, and the War Cabinet on 12 May agreed that German actions justified "unrestricted warfare", and on 14 May they authorised an attack on the night of 14/15 May against oil and rail targets in Germany. At the urging of Clement Attlee, the Cabinet on 15 May authorised a full bombing strategy against "suitable military objectives", even where there

could be civilian casualties. That evening, a night time bomber campaign began against the German oil industry, communications, and forests/crops, mainly in the Ruhr area. The RAF lacked accurate night navigation and carried small bomb loads. As the threat mounted, Bomber Command changed targeting priority on 3 June 1940 to attack the German aircraft industry. On 4 July, the Air Ministry gave Bomber Command orders to attack ports and shipping. By September, the build-up of invasion barges in the Channel ports had become a top priority target.

On 7 September, the government issued a warning that the invasion could be expected within the next few days and, that night, Bomber Command attacked the Channel ports and supply dumps. On 13 September, they carried out another large raid on the Channel ports, sinking 80 large barges in the port of Ostend. 84 barges were sunk in Dunkirk after another raid on 17 September and by 19 September, almost 200 barges had been sunk. The loss of these barges may have contributed to Hitler's decision to postpone Operation Sea Lion indefinitely. The success of these raids was in part because the Germans had few Freya radar stations set up in France, so that air defences of the French harbours were not nearly as good as the air defences over Germany; Bomber Command had directed some 60% of its strength against the Channel ports.

The Bristol Blenheim units also raided German-occupied airfields throughout July to December 1940, both during daylight hours and at night. Although most of these raids were unproductive, there were some successes; on 1 August, five out of twelve Blenheims sent to attack Haamstede and Evere (Brussels) were able to destroy or heavily damage three Bf 109s

of II./JG 27 and apparently kill a *Staffelkapitän* identified as a *Hauptmann* Albrecht von Ankum-Frank. Two other 109s were claimed by Blenheim gunners. Another successful raid on Haamstede was made by a single Blenheim on 7 August which destroyed one 109 of 4./JG 54, heavily damaged another and caused lighter damage to four more.

There were some missions that produced an almost 100% casualty rate amongst the Blenheims; one such operation was mounted on 13 August 1940 against a Luftwaffe airfield near Aalborg in north-eastern Denmark by 12 aircraft of 82 Squadron. One Blenheim returned early (the pilot was later charged and due to appear before a court martial, but was killed on another operation); the other eleven, which reached Denmark, were shot down, five by flak and six by Bf 109s. Of the 33 crewmen who took part in the attack, 20 were killed and 13 captured.

As well as the bombing operations, Blenheim-equipped units had been formed to carry out long-range strategic reconnaissance missions over Germany and German-occupied territories. In this role, the Blenheims again proved to be too slow and vulnerable against Luftwaffe fighters, and they took constant casualties.

Coastal Command directed its attention towards the protection of British shipping, and the destruction of enemy shipping. As invasion became more likely, it participated in the strikes on French harbours and airfields, laying mines, and mounting numerous reconnaissance missions over the enemy-held coast. In all, some 9,180 sorties were flown by bombers from July to October 1940. Although this was much less than the 80,000

sorties flown by fighters, bomber crews suffered about half the total casualties borne by their fighter colleagues. The bomber contribution was, therefore, much more dangerous on a loss-per-sortie comparison.

Bomber, reconnaissance, and antisubmarine patrol operations continued throughout these months with little respite and none of the publicity accorded to Fighter Command. In his famous 20 August speech about "The Few", praising Fighter Command, Churchill also made a point of mentioning Bomber Command's contribution, adding that bombers were even then striking back at Germany; this part of the speech is often overlooked, even today. The Battle of Britain Chapel in Westminster Abbey lists in a roll of honour, 718 Bomber Command crew members, and 280 from Coastal Command who were killed between 10 July and 31 October.

Bomber and Coastal Command attacks against invasion barge concentrations in Channel ports were widely reported by the British media during September and October 1940. In what became known as 'the Battle of the Barges' RAF attacks were claimed in British propaganda to have sunk large numbers of barges, and to have created widespread chaos and disruption to German invasion preparations. Given the volume of British propaganda interest in these bomber attacks during September and earlier October, it is striking how quickly this was overlooked once the Battle of Britain had been concluded. Even by mid-war, the bomber pilots' efforts had been largely eclipsed by a continuing focus on the Few, this a result of the Air Ministry's continuing valorisation of the "fighter boys", beginning with the March 1941 Battle of Britain propaganda pamphlet.

## **Air-sea rescue**

One of the biggest oversights of the entire system was the lack of adequate air-sea rescue organisation.

The RAF had started organising a system in 1940 with High Speed Launches (HSLs) based on flying boat bases and at some overseas locations, but it was still believed that the amount of cross-Channel traffic meant that there was no need for a rescue service to cover these areas.

Downed pilots and aircrew, it was hoped, would be picked up by any boats or ships which happened to be passing by. Otherwise, the local life boat would be alerted, assuming someone had seen the pilot going into the water.

RAF aircrew were issued with a life jacket, nicknamed the "Mae West," but in 1940 it still required manual inflation, which was almost impossible for someone who was injured or in shock. The waters of the English Channel and Dover Straits are cold, even in the middle of summer, and clothing issued to RAF aircrew did little to insulate them against these freezing conditions. The RAF also imitated the German practice of issuing fluorescein.

A conference in 1939 had placed air-sea rescue under Coastal Command. Because pilots had been lost at sea during the "Channel Battle", on 22 August, control of RAF rescue launches was passed to the local naval authorities and 12 Lysanders were given to Fighter Command to help look for pilots at sea. In all, some 200 pilots and aircrew were lost at sea during the battle. No proper air-sea rescue service was formed until 1941.

## Phases of the battle

The battle covered a shifting geographical area, and there have been differing opinions on significant dates: when the Air Ministry proposed 8 August as the start, Dowding responded that operations "merged into one another almost insensibly", and proposed 10 July as the onset of increased attacks.

With the caution that phases drifted into each other and dates are not firm, the Royal Air Force Museum states that five main phases can be identified:

- 26 June – 16 July: *Störangriffe* ("nuisance raids"), scattered small scale probing attacks both day and night, armed reconnaissance and mine-laying sorties. From 4 July, daylight *Kanalkampf* ("the Channel battles") against shipping.
- 17 July – 12 August: daylight *Kanalkampf* attacks on shipping intensify through this period, increased attacks on ports and coastal airfields, night raids on RAF and aircraft manufacturing.
- 13 August – 6 September: *Adlerangriff* ("Eagle Attack"), the main assault; attempt to destroy the RAF in southern England, including massive daylight attacks on RAF airfields, followed from 19 August by heavy night bombing of ports and industrial cities, including suburbs of London.
- 7 September – 2 October: the Blitz commences, main focus day and night attacks on London.
- 3–31 October: large scale night bombing raids, mostly on London; daylight attacks now confined to



small scale fighter-bomber *Störangriffe* raids luring RAF fighters into dogfights.

### **Small scale raids**

Following Germany's rapid territorial gains in the Battle of France, the Luftwaffe had to reorganise its forces, set up bases along the coast, and rebuild after heavy losses. It began small scale bombing raids on Britain on the night of 5/6 June, and continued sporadic attacks throughout June and July. The first large-scale attack was at night, on 18/19 June, when small raids scattered between Yorkshire and Kent involved in total 100 bombers. These *Störangriffe* ("nuisance raids") which involved only a few aeroplanes, sometimes just one, were used to train bomber crews in both day and night attacks, to test defences and try out methods, with most flights at night. They found that, rather than carrying small numbers of large high explosive bombs, it was more effective to use more small bombs, similarly incendiaries had to cover a large area to set effective fires. These training flights continued through August and into the first week of September. Against this, the raids also gave the British time to assess the German tactics, and invaluable time for the RAF fighters and anti-aircraft defences to prepare and gain practice.

The attacks were widespread: over the night of 30 June alarms were set off in 20 counties by just 20 bombers, then next day the first daylight raids occurred during 1 July, on both Hull in Yorkshire and Wick, Caithness. On 3 July most flights were reconnaissance sorties, but 15 civilians were killed when bombs hit Guildford in Surrey. Numerous small *Störangriffe* raids, both day and night, were made daily through August,

September and into the winter, with aims including bringing RAF fighters up to battle, destruction of specific military and economic targets, and setting off air-raid warnings to affect civilian morale: four major air-raids in August involved hundreds of bombers, in the same month 1,062 small raids were made, spread across the whole of Britain.

## **Channel battles**

The *Kanalkampf* comprised a series of running fights over convoys in the English Channel. It was launched partly because Kesselring and Sperrle were not sure about what else to do, and partly because it gave German aircrews some training and a chance to probe the British defences. Dowding could provide only minimal shipping protection, and these battles off the coast tended to favour the Germans, whose bomber escorts had the advantage of altitude and outnumbered the RAF fighters. From 9 July reconnaissance probing by Dornier Do 17 bombers put a severe strain on RAF pilots and machines, with high RAF losses to Bf 109s. When nine 141 Squadron Defiants went into action on 19 July six were lost to Bf 109s before a squadron of Hurricanes intervened. On 25 July a coal convoy and escorting destroyers suffered such heavy losses to attacks by Stuka dive bombers that the Admiralty decided convoys should travel at night: the RAF shot down 16 raiders but lost 7 aircraft. By 8 August 18 coal ships and 4 destroyers had been sunk, but the Navy was determined to send a convoy of 20 ships through rather than move the coal by railway. After repeated Stuka attacks that day, six ships were badly damaged, four were sunk and only four reached their destination. The RAF lost 19 fighters and shot down 31 German aircraft. The Navy now cancelled all further convoys

through the Channel and sent the cargo by rail. Even so, these early combat encounters provided both sides with experience.

## **Main assault**

The main attack upon the RAF's defences was code-named *Adlerangriff* ("Eagle Attack"). Intelligence reports gave Göring the impression that the RAF was almost defeated, and raids would attract British fighters for the Luftwaffe to shoot down. The strategy agreed on 6 August was to destroy RAF Fighter Command across the south of England in four days, then bombing of military and economic targets was to systematically extend up to the Midlands until daylight attacks could proceed unhindered over the whole of Britain, culminating in a major bombing attack on London.

## **Assault on RAF: radar and airfields**

Poor weather delayed *Adlertag* ("Eagle Day") until 13 August 1940. On 12 August, the first attempt was made to blind the Dowding system, when aircraft from the specialist fighter-bomber unit *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 attacked four radar stations. Three were briefly taken off the air but were back working within six hours. The raids appeared to show that British radars were difficult to knock out. The failure to mount follow-up attacks allowed the RAF to get the stations back on the air, and the Luftwaffe neglected strikes on the supporting infrastructure, such as phone lines and power stations, which could have rendered the radars useless, even if the towers themselves (which were very difficult to destroy) remained intact.

*Adlertag* opened with a series of attacks, led again by *Erpro* 210, on coastal airfields used as forward landing grounds for the RAF fighters, as well as 'satellite airfields' (including Manston and Hawkinge).

As the week drew on, the airfield attacks moved further inland, and repeated raids were made on the radar chain. 15 August was "The Greatest Day" when the Luftwaffe mounted the largest number of sorties of the campaign. *Luftflotte* 5 attacked the north of England. Believing Fighter Command strength to be concentrated in the south, raiding forces from Denmark and Norway ran into unexpectedly strong resistance. Inadequately escorted by Bf 110s, bombers were shot down in large numbers. North East England was attacked by 65 Heinkel 111s escorted by 34 Messerschmitt 110s, and RAF Great Driffield was attacked by 50 unescorted Junkers 88s. Out of 115 bombers and 35 fighters sent, 75 planes were destroyed and many others damaged beyond repair. Furthermore, due to early engagement by RAF fighters many of the bombers dropped their payloads ineffectively early. As a result of these casualties, *Luftflotte* 5 did not appear in strength again in the campaign.

- 18 August, which had the greatest number of casualties to both sides, has been dubbed "The Hardest Day". Following this grinding battle, exhaustion and the weather reduced operations for most of a week, allowing the Luftwaffe to review their performance. "The Hardest Day" had sounded the end for the Ju 87 in the campaign. This veteran of *Blitzkrieg* was too vulnerable to fighters to operate over Britain. So as to preserve the *Stuka* force, Göring withdrew them from the fighting. This

removed the main Luftwaffe precision-bombing weapon and shifted the burden of pinpoint attacks on the already-stretched *Erpro 210*. The Bf 110 proved too clumsy for dogfighting with single-engined fighters, and its participation was scaled back. It would be used only when range required it or when sufficient single-engined escort could not be provided for the bombers.

Göring made yet another important decision: to order more bomber escorts at the expense of free-hunting sweeps. To achieve this, the weight of the attack now fell on *Luftflotte 2*, and the bulk of the Bf 109s in *Luftflotte 3* were transferred to Kesselring's command, reinforcing the fighter bases in the Pas-de-Calais.

Stripped of its fighters, *Luftflotte 3* would concentrate on the night bombing campaign. Göring, expressing disappointment with the fighter performance thus far in the campaign, also made sweeping changes in the command structure of the fighter units, replacing many *Geschwaderkommodore* with younger, more aggressive pilots like Adolf Galland and Werner Mölders.

Finally, Göring stopped the attacks on the radar chain. These were seen as unsuccessful, and neither the *Reichsmarschall* nor his subordinates realised how vital the Chain Home stations were to the defence systems.

It was known that radar provided some early warning of raids, but the belief among German fighter pilots was that anything bringing up the "Tommies" to fight was to be encouraged.

## **Raids on British cities**

On the afternoon of 15 August, *Hauptmann* Walter Rubensdörffer leading *Erprobungsgruppe* 210 mistakenly bombed Croydon airfield (on the outskirts of London) instead of the intended target, RAF Kenley.

German intelligence reports made the Luftwaffe optimistic that the RAF, thought to be dependent on local air control, was struggling with supply problems and pilot losses. After a major raid attacking Biggin Hill on 18 August, Luftwaffe aircrew said they had been unopposed, the airfield was "completely destroyed", and asked, "Is England already finished?" In accordance with the strategy agreed on 6 August, defeat of the RAF was to be followed by bombing military and economic targets, systematically extending up to the Midlands.

Göring ordered attacks on aircraft factories on 19 August 1940. Sixty raids on the night of 19/20 August targeted the aircraft industry and harbours, and bombs fell on suburban areas around London: Croydon, Wimbledon and the Maldens. Night raids were made on 21/22 August on Aberdeen, Bristol and South Wales. That morning, bombs were dropped on Harrow and Wealdstone, on the outskirts of London. Overnight on 22/23 August, the output of an aircraft factory at Filton near Bristol was drastically affected by a raid in which Ju88 bombers released over 16 tons of high explosive bombs. On the night of 23/24 August over 200 bombers attacked the Fort Dunlop tyre factory in Birmingham, with a significant effect on production. A sustained bombing campaign began on 24 August with the largest raid so far, killing 100 in Portsmouth, and that night, several areas of London were bombed; the East

End was set ablaze and bombs landed on central London. Some historians believe that these bombs were dropped accidentally by a group of Heinkel He 111s which had failed to find their target; this account has been contested.

More night raids were made around London on 24/25 August, when bombs fell on Croydon, Banstead, Lewisham, Uxbridge, Harrow and Hayes. London was on red alert over the night of 28/29 August, with bombs reported in Finchley, St Pancras, Wembley, Wood Green, Southgate, Old Kent Road, Mill Hill, Ilford, Chigwell and Hendon.

### **Attacks on airfields from 24 August**

Göring's directive issued on 23 August 1940 ordered ceaseless attacks on the aircraft industry and on RAF ground organisation to force the RAF to use its fighters, continuing the tactic of luring them up to be destroyed, and added that focussed attacks were to be made on RAF airfields.

From 24 August onwards, the battle was a fight between Kesselring's *Luftflotte 2* and Park's 11 Group. The Luftwaffe concentrated all their strength on knocking out Fighter Command and made repeated attacks on the airfields. Of the 33 heavy attacks in the following two weeks, 24 were against airfields. The key sector stations were hit repeatedly: Biggin Hill and Hornchurch four times each; Debden and North Weald twice each. Croydon, Gravesend, Rochford, Hawkinge and Manston were also attacked in strength. Coastal Command's Eastchurch was bombed at least seven times because it was believed to be a Fighter Command aerodrome. At times these

raids caused some damage to the sector stations, threatening the integrity of the Dowding system.

To offset some losses, some 58 Fleet Air Arm fighter pilot volunteers were seconded to RAF squadrons, and a similar number of former Fairey Battle pilots were used. Most replacements from Operational Training Units (OTUs) had as little as nine hours flying time and no gunnery or air-to-air combat training.

At this point, the multinational nature of Fighter Command came to the fore. Many squadrons and personnel from the air forces of the Dominions were already attached to the RAF, including top-level commanders – Australians, Canadians, New Zealanders, Rhodesians and South Africans. In addition, there were other nationalities represented, including Free French, Belgian and a Jewish pilot from the British mandate of Palestine.

They were bolstered by the arrival of fresh Czechoslovak and Polish squadrons. These had been held back by Dowding, who thought non-English speaking aircrew would have trouble working within his control system: Polish and Czech fliers proved to be especially effective. The pre-war Polish Air Force had lengthy and extensive training, and high standards; with Poland conquered and under brutal German occupation, the pilots of No. 303 (Polish) Squadron, the highest-scoring Allied unit, were strongly motivated. Josef František, a Czech regular airman who had flown from the occupation of his own country to join the Polish and then French air forces before arriving in Britain, flew as a guest of 303 Squadron and was ultimately credited with the highest "RAF score" in the Battle of Britain.



The RAF had the advantage of fighting over home territory. Pilots who bailed out of their downed aircraft could be back at their airfields within hours, while if low on fuel and/or ammunition they could be immediately rearmed. One RAF pilot interviewed in late 1940 had been shot down five times during the Battle of Britain, but was able to crash land in Britain or bail out each time.

For Luftwaffe aircrews, a bailout over England meant capture – in the critical August period, almost exactly as many Luftwaffe pilots were taken prisoner as were killed – while parachuting into the English Channel often meant drowning or death from exposure. Morale began to suffer, and *Kanalkrankheit* ("Channel sickness") – a form of combat fatigue – began to appear among the German pilots. Their replacement problem became even worse than the British.

### **Assessment of attempt to destroy the RAF**

The effect of the German attacks on airfields is unclear. According to Stephen Bungay, Dowding, in a letter to Hugh Trenchard accompanying Park's report on the period 8 August – 10 September 1940, states that the Luftwaffe "achieved very little" in the last week of August and the first week of September.

The only Sector Station to be shut down operationally was Biggin Hill, and it was non-operational for just two hours. Dowding admitted 11 Group's efficiency was impaired but, despite serious damage to some airfields, only two out of 13 heavily attacked airfields were down for more than a few hours. The German refocus on London was not critical.

Retired Air Vice-Marshal Peter Dye, head of the RAF Museum, discussed the logistics of the battle in 2000 and 2010, dealing specifically with the single-seat fighters. Dye contends that not only was British aircraft production replacing aircraft, but replacement pilots were keeping pace with losses. The number of pilots in RAF Fighter Command increased during July, August and September. The figures indicate the number of pilots available never decreased: from July, 1,200 were available, and from 1 August, 1,400 were available. Just over that number were in the field by September. In October the figure was nearly 1,600. By 1 November 1,800 were available. Throughout the battle, the RAF had more fighter pilots available than the Luftwaffe. Although the RAF's reserves of single-seat fighters fell during July, the wastage was made up for by an efficient Civilian Repair Organisation (CRO), which by December had repaired and put back into service some 4,955 aircraft, and by aircraft held at Air Servicing Unit (ASU) airfields.

Richard Overy agrees with Dye and Bungay. Overy asserts only one airfield was temporarily put out of action and "only" 103 pilots were lost. British fighter production produced 496 new aircraft in July and 467 in August, and another 467 in September (not counting repaired aircraft), covering the losses of August and September. Overy indicates the number of serviceable and total strength returns reveal an *increase* in fighters from 3 August to 7 September, 1,061 on strength and 708 serviceable to 1,161 on strength and 746 serviceable. Moreover, Overy points out that the number of RAF fighter pilots grew by one-third between June and August 1940. Personnel records show a constant supply of around 1,400 pilots in the crucial weeks of the battle. In the second half of

September it reached 1,500. The shortfall of pilots was never above 10%. The Germans never had more than between 1,100 and 1,200 pilots, a deficiency of up to one-third. "If Fighter Command were 'the few', the German fighter pilots were fewer".

Other scholars assert that this period was the most dangerous of all. In *The Narrow Margin*, published in 1961, historians Derek Wood and Derek Dempster believed that the two weeks from 24 August to 6 September represented a real danger. According to them, from 24 August to 6 September 295 fighters had been totally destroyed and 171 badly damaged, against a total output of 269 new and repaired Spitfires and Hurricanes. They assert that 103 pilots were killed or missing and 128 were wounded, which represented a total wastage of 120 pilots per week out of a fighting strength of just fewer than 1,000. They conclude that during August no more than 260 fighter pilots were turned out by OTUs and casualties in the same month were just over 300. A full squadron establishment was 26 pilots whereas the average in August was 16. In their assessment, the RAF was losing the battle. Denis Richards, in his 1953 contribution to the official British account *History of the Second World War*, agreed that lack of pilots, especially experienced ones, was the RAF's greatest problem. He states that between 8 and 18 August 154 RAF pilots were killed, severely wounded, or missing, while only 63 new pilots were trained. Availability of aircraft was also a serious issue. While its reserves during the Battle of Britain never declined to a half dozen planes as some later claimed, Richards describes 24 August to 6 September as the critical period because during these two weeks Germany destroyed far more aircraft through its attacks on 11 Group's southeast bases than Britain was producing. Three more weeks of such a pace would indeed have

exhausted aircraft reserves. Germany had seen heavy losses of pilots and aircraft as well, thus its shift to night-time attacks in September. On 7 September RAF aircraft losses fell below British production and remained so until the end of the war.

### **Day and night attacks on London: start of the Blitz**

Hitler's "Directive No. 17 – For the conduct of air and sea warfare against England" issued on 1 August 1940, reserved to himself the right to decide on terror attacks as measures of reprisal. Hitler issued a directive that London was not to be bombed save on his sole instruction. In preparation, detailed target plans under the code name Operation Loge for raids on communications, power stations, armaments works and docks in the Port of London were distributed to the *Fliegerkorps* in July. The port areas were crowded next to residential housing and civilian casualties would be expected, but this would combine military and economic targets with indirect effects on morale. The strategy agreed on 6 August was for raids on military and economic targets in towns and cities to culminate in a major attack on London. In mid-August, raids were made on targets on the outskirts of London.

Luftwaffe doctrine included the possibility of retaliatory attacks on cities, and since 11 May small scale night raids by RAF Bomber Command had frequently bombed residential areas. The Germans assumed this was deliberate, and as the raids increased in frequency and scale the population grew impatient for measures of revenge. On 25 August 1940, 81 bombers of Bomber Command were sent out to raid industrial and commercial targets in Berlin. Clouds prevented accurate identification and the bombs fell across the city, causing some

casualties among the civilian population as well as damage to residential areas. Continuing RAF raids on Berlin led to Hitler withdrawing his directive on 30 August, and giving the go-ahead to the planned bombing offensive. On 3 September Göring planned to bomb London daily, with General Albert Kesselring's enthusiastic support, having received reports the average strength of RAF squadrons was down to five or seven fighters out of twelve and their airfields in the area were out of action. Hitler issued a directive on 5 September to attack cities including London. In his widely publicised speech delivered on 4 September 1940, Hitler condemned the bombing of Berlin and presented the planned attacks on London as reprisals. The first daylight raid was titled *Vergeltungsangriff* (revenge attack).

- On 7 September, a massive series of raids involving nearly four hundred bombers and more than six hundred fighters targeted docks in the East End of London, day and night. The RAF anticipated attacks on airfields and 11 Group rose to meet them, in greater numbers than the Luftwaffe expected. The first official deployment of 12 Group's Leigh-Mallory's Big Wing took twenty minutes to form up, missing its intended target, but encountering another formation of bombers while still climbing. They returned, apologetic about their limited success, and blamed the delay on being scrambled too late.

The German press jubilantly announced that "one great cloud of smoke stretches tonight from the middle of London to the mouth of the Thames." Reports reflected the briefings given to

crews before the raids - "Everyone knew about the last cowardly attacks on German cities, and thought about wives, mothers and children. And then came that word 'Vengeance!'" Pilots reported seeing ruined airfields as they flew towards London, appearances which gave intelligence reports the impression of devastated defences. Göring maintained that the RAF was close to defeat, making invasion feasible.

Fighter Command had been at its lowest ebb, short of men and machines, and the break from airfield attacks allowed them to recover. 11 Group had considerable success in breaking up daytime raids. 12 Group repeatedly disobeyed orders and failed to meet requests to protect 11 Group airfields, but their experiments with increasingly large Big Wings had some success. The Luftwaffe began to abandon their morning raids, with attacks on London starting late in the afternoon for fifty-seven consecutive nights.

The most damaging aspect to the Luftwaffe of targeting London was the increased distance. The Bf 109E escorts had a limited fuel capacity resulting in only a 660 km (410-mile) maximum range solely on internal fuel, and when they arrived had only 10 minutes of flying time before turning for home, leaving the bombers undefended by fighter escorts.

Its eventual stablemate, the Focke-Wulf Fw 190A, was flying only in prototype form in mid-1940; the first 28 Fw 190s were not delivered until November 1940. The Fw 190A-1 had a maximum range of 940 km (584 miles) on internal fuel, 40% greater than the Bf 109E. The Messerschmitt Bf 109E-7 corrected this deficiency by adding a ventral centre-line ordnance rack to take either an SC 250 bomb or a standard

300-litre Luftwaffe drop tank to double the range to 1,325 km (820 mi). The ordnance rack was not retrofitted to earlier Bf 109Es until October 1940.

On 14 September, Hitler chaired a meeting with the OKW staff. Göring was in France directing the decisive battle, so Erhard Milch deputised for him. Hitler asked "Should we call it off altogether?" General Hans Jeschonnek, Luftwaffe Chief of Staff, begged for a last chance to defeat the RAF and for permission to launch attacks on civilian residential areas to cause mass panic. Hitler refused the latter, perhaps unaware of how much damage had already been done to civilian targets. He reserved for himself the power to unleash the terror weapon. Instead, political will was to be broken by destroying the material infrastructure, the weapons industry, and stocks of fuel and food.

On 15 September, two massive waves of German attacks were decisively repulsed by the RAF by deploying every aircraft in 11 Group. Sixty German and twenty-six RAF aircraft were shot down. The action was the climax of the Battle of Britain.

Two days after the German defeat Hitler postponed preparations for the invasion of Britain. Henceforth, in the face of mounting losses in men, aircraft and the lack of adequate replacements, the Luftwaffe completed their gradual shift from daylight bomber raids and continued with nighttime bombing. 15 September is commemorated as Battle of Britain Day.

### **Night time Blitz, fighter-bomber day raids**

At the 14 September OKW conference, Hitler acknowledged that the Luftwaffe had still not gained the air superiority needed for

the Operation Sealion invasion. In agreement with Raeder's written recommendation, Hitler said the campaign was to intensify regardless of invasion plans: "The decisive thing is the ceaseless continuation of air attacks." Jeschonnek proposed attacking residential areas to cause "mass panic", but Hitler turned this down: he reserved to himself the option of terror bombing. British morale was to be broken by destroying infrastructure, armaments manufacturing, fuel and food stocks. On 16 September, Göring gave the order for this change in strategy. This new phase was to be the first independent strategic bombing campaign, in hopes of a political success forcing the British to give up. Hitler hoped it might result in "eight million going mad" (referring to the population of London in 1940), which would "cause a catastrophe" for the British. In those circumstances, Hitler said, "even a small invasion might go a long way". Hitler was against cancelling the invasion as "the cancellation would reach the ears of the enemy and strengthen his resolve". On 19 September, Hitler ordered a reduction in work on Sealion. He doubted if strategic bombing could achieve its aims, but ending the air war would be an open admission of defeat. He had to maintain the appearance of concentration on defeating Britain, to conceal from Joseph Stalin his covert aim to invade the Soviet Union.

Throughout the battle, most Luftwaffe bombing raids had been at night. They increasingly suffered unsustainable losses in daylight raids, and the last massive daytime attacks were on 15 September. A raid of 70 bombers on 18 September also suffered badly, and day raids were gradually phased out leaving the main attacks at night. Fighter command still lacked any successful way of intercepting night-time raiders, the night



fighter force was mostly Blenheims and Beaufighters, and lacked airborne radar so had no way of finding the bombers. Anti-aircraft guns were diverted to London's defences, but had a much-reduced success rate against night attacks.

From mid September, Luftwaffe daylight bombing was gradually taken over by Bf 109 fighters, adapted to take one 250 kg bomb. Small groups of fighter-bombers would carry out *Störangriffe* raids escorted by large escort formations of about 200 to 300 combat fighters. They flew at altitudes over 20,000 feet (6,100 m) where the Bf 109 had an advantage over RAF fighters, except the Spitfire. The raids disturbed civilians, and continued the war of attrition against Fighter Command. The raids were intended to carry out precision bombing on military or economic targets, but it was hard to achieve sufficient accuracy with the single bomb. Sometimes, when attacked, the fighter-bombers had to jettison the bomb to function as fighters. The RAF was at a disadvantage and changed defensive tactics by introducing standing patrols of Spitfires at high altitude to monitor incoming raids. On a sighting, other patrols at lower altitude would fly up to join the battle.

A Junkers Ju 88 returning from a raid on London was shot down in Kent on 27 September resulting in the Battle of Graveney Marsh, the last action between British and foreign military forces on British mainland soil.

German bombing of Britain reached its peak in October and November 1940. In post-war interrogation, Wilhelm Keitel described the aims as economic blockade, in conjunction with submarine warfare, and attrition of Britain's military and economic resources. The Luftwaffe wanted to achieve victory on

its own and was reluctant to cooperate with the navy. Their strategy for the blockade was to destroy ports and storage facilities in towns and cities. Priorities were based on the pattern of trade and distribution, so for these months, London was the main target. In November their attention turned to other ports and industrial targets around Britain.

Hitler postponed the Sealion invasion on 13 October "until the spring of 1941". It was not until Hitler's Directive 21 was issued, on 18 December 1940, that the threat to Britain of invasion finally ended.

## **Royal family**

During the battle, and for the rest of the war, an important factor in keeping public morale high was the continued presence in London of King George VI and his wife Queen Elizabeth. When war broke out in 1939, the King and Queen decided to stay in London and not flee to Canada, as had been suggested. George VI and Elizabeth officially stayed in Buckingham Palace throughout the war, although they often spent weekends at Windsor Castle to visit their daughters, Elizabeth (the future queen) and Margaret.

Buckingham Palace was damaged by bombs which landed in the grounds on 10 September and, on 13 September, more serious damage was caused by two bombs which destroyed the Royal Chapel.

The royal couple were in a small sitting room about 80 yards from where the bombs exploded. On 24 September, in recognition of the bravery of civilians, King George VI inaugurated the award of the George Cross.

## **Attrition statistics**

Overall, by 2 November, the RAF fielded 1,796 pilots, an increase of over 40% from July 1940's count of 1,259 pilots. Based on German sources (from a Luftwaffe intelligence officer Otto Bechtle attached to KG 2 in February 1944) translated by the Air Historical Branch, Stephen Bungay asserts German fighter and bomber "strength" declined without recovery, and that from August–December 1940, the German fighter and bomber strength declined by 30 and 25 percent. In contrast, Williamson Murray, argues (using translations by the Air Historical Branch) that 1,380 German bombers were on strength on 29 June 1940, 1,420 bombers on 28 September, 1,423 level bombers on 2 November and 1,393 bombers on 30 November 1940.

In July–September the number of Luftwaffe pilots available fell by 136, but the number of operational pilots had shrunk by 171 by September. The training organisation of the Luftwaffe was failing to replace losses. German fighter pilots, in contrast to popular perception, were not afforded training or rest rotations unlike their British counterparts. The first week of September accounted for 25% of Fighter Command's and 24% of the Luftwaffe's overall losses. Between the dates 26 August – 6 September, on only one day (1 September) did the Germans destroy more aircraft than they lost. Losses were 325 German and 248 British.

Luftwaffe losses for August numbered 774 aircraft to all causes, representing 18.5% of all combat aircraft at the beginning of the month. Fighter Command's losses in August were 426 fighters destroyed, amounting to 40 per cent of 1,061

fighters available on 3 August. In addition, 99 German bombers and 27 other types were destroyed between 1 and 29 August.

From July to September, the Luftwaffe's loss records indicate the loss of 1,636 aircraft, 1,184 to enemy action. This represented 47% of the initial strength of single-engined fighters, 66% of twin-engined fighters, and 45% of bombers. This indicates the Germans were running out of aircrew as well as aircraft.

Throughout the battle, the Germans greatly underestimated the size of the RAF and the scale of British aircraft production. Across the Channel, the Air Intelligence division of the Air Ministry consistently overestimated the size of the German air enemy and the productive capacity of the German aviation industry. As the battle was fought, both sides exaggerated the losses inflicted on the other by an equally large margin. The intelligence picture formed before the battle encouraged the Luftwaffe to believe that such losses pushed Fighter Command to the very edge of defeat, while the exaggerated picture of German air strength persuaded the RAF that the threat it faced was larger and more dangerous than was the case.

This led the British to the conclusion that another fortnight of attacks on airfields might force Fighter Command to withdraw their squadrons from the south of England. The German misconception, on the other hand, encouraged first complacency, then strategic misjudgement. The shift of targets from air bases to industry and communications was taken because it was assumed that Fighter Command was virtually eliminated.

Between 24 August and 4 September, German serviceability rates, which were acceptable at *Stuka* units, were running at 75% with Bf 109s, 70% with bombers and 65% with Bf 110s, indicating a shortage of spare parts. All units were well below established strength. The attrition was beginning to affect the fighters in particular. By 14 September, the Luftwaffe's Bf 109 *Geschwader* possessed only 67% of their operational crews against authorised aircraft. For Bf 110 units it was 46 per cent; and for bombers it was 59 per cent. A week later the figures had dropped to 64 per cent, 52% and 52 per cent. Serviceability rates in Fighter Command's fighter squadrons, between 24 August and 7 September, were listed as: 64.8% on 24 August; 64.7% on 31 August and 64.25% on 7 September 1940.

Due to the failure of the Luftwaffe to establish air supremacy, a conference assembled on 14 September at Hitler's headquarters. Hitler concluded that air superiority had not yet been established and "promised to review the situation on 17 September for possible landings on 27 September or 8 October. Three days later, when the evidence was clear that the German Air Force had greatly exaggerated the extent of their successes against the RAF, Hitler postponed *Sea Lion* indefinitely."

## **Propaganda**

Propaganda was an important element of the air war which began to develop over Britain from 18 June 1940 onwards, when the Luftwaffe began small, probing daylight raids to test RAF defences. One of many examples of these small-scale raids was the destruction of a school at Polruan in Cornwall, by a single raider. Into early July, the British media's focus on the

air battles increased steadily, the press, magazines, BBC radio and newsreels daily conveying the contents of Air Ministry communiques. The German OKW communiques matched Britain's efforts in claiming the upper hand.

Central to the propaganda war on both sides of the Channel were aircraft claims, which are discussed under 'Attrition statistics' (above). These daily claims were important both for sustaining British home front morale and persuading America to support Britain, and were produced by the Air Ministry's Air Intelligence branch. Under pressure from American journalists and broadcasters to prove that the RAF's claims were genuine, RAF intelligence compared pilots' claims with actual aircraft wrecks and those seen to crash into the sea.

It was soon realised that there was a discrepancy between the two, but the Air Ministry decided not to reveal this. In fact, it was not until May 1947 that the actual figures were released to the public, by which time it was of far less importance. Many though refused to believe the revised figures, including Douglas Bader. The place of the Battle of Britain in British popular memory partly stems from the Air Ministry's successful propaganda campaign in July–October 1940, and its valorisation of the defending pilots from March 1941 onwards. The 3d pamphlet *The Battle of Britain* sold in huge numbers internationally, leading even Goebbels to admire its propaganda value. Focusing only upon the fighter pilots, with no mention of RAF bomber attacks against invasion barges, the Battle of Britain was soon established as a major victory for Fighter Command. This inspired feature films, books, magazines, works of art, poetry, radio plays and MOI short films.

The Air Ministry also developed the Battle of Britain Sunday commemoration, supported a Battle of Britain clasp for issue to the pilots in 1945 and, from 1945, Battle of Britain Week. The Battle of Britain window in Westminster Abbey was also encouraged by the Air Ministry, Lords Trenchard and Dowding on its committee. By July 1947 when the window was unveiled, the Battle of Britain had already attained central prominence as Fighter Command's most notable victory, the fighter pilots credited with preventing invasion in 1940. Although given widespread media coverage in September and October 1940, RAF Bomber and Coastal Command raids against invasion barge concentrations were less well-remembered.

## **Aftermath**

The Battle of Britain marked the first major defeat of Germany's military forces, with air superiority seen as the key to victory. Pre-war theories had led to exaggerated fears of strategic bombing, and UK public opinion was buoyed by coming through the ordeal. For the RAF, Fighter Command had achieved a great victory in successfully carrying out Sir Thomas Inskip's 1937 air policy of preventing the Germans from knocking Britain out of the war.

The battle also significantly shifted American opinion. During the battle, many Americans accepted the view promoted by Joseph Kennedy, the American ambassador in London, who believed that the United Kingdom could not survive. Roosevelt wanted a second opinion, and sent William "Wild Bill" Donovan on a brief visit to the UK; he became convinced the UK would survive and should be supported in every possible way. Before the end of the year, American journalist Ralph Ingersoll, after

returning from Britain, published a book concluding that "Adolf Hitler met his first defeat in eight years" in what might "go down in history as a battle as important as Waterloo or Gettysburg". The turning point was when the Germans reduced the intensity of the Blitz after 15 September. According to Ingersoll, "[a] majority of responsible British officers who fought through this battle believe that if Hitler and Göring had had the courage and the resources to lose 200 planes a day for the next five days, nothing could have saved London"; instead, "[the Luftwaffe's] morale in combat is definitely broken, and the RAF has been gaining in strength each week."

Both sides in the battle made exaggerated claims of numbers of enemy aircraft shot down. In general, claims were two to three times the actual numbers. Postwar analysis of records has shown that between July and September, the RAF claimed 2,698 kills, while the Luftwaffe fighters claimed 3,198 RAF aircraft downed. Total losses, and start and end dates for recorded losses, vary for both sides. Luftwaffe losses from 10 July to 30 October 1940 total 1,977 aircraft, including 243 twin- and 569 single-engined fighters, 822 bombers and 343 non-combat types. In the same period, RAF Fighter Command aircraft losses number 1,087, including 53 twin-engined fighters. To the RAF figure should be added 376 Bomber Command and 148 Coastal Command aircraft lost conducting bombing, mining, and reconnaissance operations in defence of the country.

There is a consensus among historians that the Luftwaffe were unable to crush the RAF. Stephen Bungay described Dowding and Park's strategy of choosing when to engage the enemy whilst maintaining a coherent force as vindicated; their



leadership, and the subsequent debates about strategy and tactics, had created enmity among RAF senior commanders and both were sacked from their posts in the immediate aftermath of the battle. All things considered, the RAF proved to be a robust and capable organisation that was to use all the modern resources available to it to the maximum advantage. Richard Evans wrote:

Irrespective of whether Hitler was really set on this course, he simply lacked the resources to establish the air superiority that was the sine qua non [prerequisite] of a successful crossing of the English Channel. A third of the initial strength of the German air force, the Luftwaffe, had been lost in the western campaign in the spring. The Germans lacked the trained pilots, the effective fighter aircraft, and the heavy bombers that would have been needed.

The Germans launched some spectacular attacks against important British industries, but they could not destroy the British industrial potential, and made little systematic effort to do so. Hindsight does not disguise the fact the threat to Fighter Command was very real, and for the participants it seemed as if there was a narrow margin between victory and defeat. Nevertheless, even if the German attacks on the 11 Group airfields which guarded southeast England and the approaches to London had continued, the RAF could have withdrawn to the Midlands out of German fighter range and continued the battle from there. The victory was as much psychological as physical. Writes Alfred Price:

The truth of the matter, borne out by the events of 18 August is more prosaic: neither by attacking the airfields nor by

attacking London, was the Luftwaffe likely to destroy Fighter Command. Given the size of the British fighter force and the general high quality of its equipment, training and morale, the Luftwaffe could have achieved no more than a Pyrrhic victory.

During the action on 18 August, it had cost the Luftwaffe five trained aircrew killed, wounded or taken prisoner, for each British fighter pilot killed or wounded; the ratio was similar on other days in the battle. And this ratio of 5:1 was very close to that between the number of German aircrew involved in the battle and those in Fighter Command.

In other words, the two sides were suffering almost the same losses in trained aircrew, in proportion to their overall strengths.

In the Battle of Britain, for the first time during the Second World War, the German war machine had set itself a major task which it patently failed to achieve, and so demonstrated that it was not invincible. In stiffening the resolve of those determined to resist Hitler the battle was an important turning point in the conflict.

The British victory in the Battle of Britain was achieved at a heavy cost. Total British civilian losses from July to December 1940 were 23,002 dead and 32,138 wounded, with one of the largest single raids on 19 December 1940, in which almost 3,000 civilians died.

With the culmination of the concentrated daylight raids, Britain was able to rebuild its military forces and establish itself as an Allied stronghold, later serving as a base from which the Liberation of Western Europe was launched.

## Battle of Britain Day

Winston Churchill summed up the battle with the words, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few". Pilots who fought in the battle have been known as *The Few* ever since; at times being specially commemorated on 15 September, "Battle of Britain Day". On this day in 1940, the Luftwaffe embarked on their largest bombing attack yet, forcing the engagement of the entirety of the RAF in defence of London and the South East, which resulted in a decisive British victory that proved to mark a turning point in Britain's favour.

Within the Commonwealth, Battle of Britain Day has been observed more usually on the third Sunday in September, and even on the 2nd Thursday in September in some areas in the British Channel Islands.

The day has been observed by many artists over the years, often with works that show the battle itself. Many mixed media artists have also created pieces in honour of the Battle of Britain.

## Chapter 4

# Pearl Harbor

Pearl Harbor is an American lagoon harbor on the island of Oahu, Hawaii, west of Honolulu. It has been long visited by the Naval fleet of the United States, before it was acquired from the Hawaiian Kingdom by the U.S. with the signing of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875. Much of the harbor and surrounding lands are now a United States Navy deep-water naval base. It is also the headquarters of the United States Pacific Fleet. The U.S. government first obtained exclusive use of the inlet and the right to maintain a repair and coaling station for ships here in 1887. The surprise attack by the Imperial Japanese Navy on December 7, 1941, led the United States to declare war on the Empire of Japan, making the attack on Pearl Harbor the immediate cause of the United States' entry into World War II.

## History

Pearl Harbor was originally an extensive shallow embayment called *WaiMomi* (meaning, "Waters of Pearl") or *Pu'uloa* (meaning, "long hill") by the Hawaiians. *Pu'uloa* was regarded as the home of the shark goddess, *Ka'ahupahau*, and her brother (or son), *Kahi'uka*, in Hawaiian legends. According to tradition, *Keaunui*, the head of the powerful *Ewa* chiefs, is credited with cutting a navigable channel near the present *Pu'uloa* saltworks, by which he made the estuary, known as "Pearl River," accessible to navigation. Making due allowance for legendary amplification, the estuary already had an outlet

for its waters where the present gap is; but Keaunui is typically given the credit for widening and deepening it.

## **Nineteenth century**

During the early nineteenth century, Pearl Harbor was not used for large ships due to its shallow entrance. The United States' interest in the Hawaiian Islands grew as a result of its whaling, shipping and trading activity in the Pacific. As early as 1820, an "Agent of the United States for Commerce and Seamen" was appointed to look after American business in the Port of Honolulu. These commercial ties to the American continent were accompanied by the work of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. American missionaries and their families became an integral part of the Hawaiian political body.

Throughout the 1820s and 1830s, many American warships visited Honolulu. In most cases, the commanding officers carried letters from the U.S. Government giving advice on governmental affairs and of the relations of the island nation with foreign powers. In 1841, the newspaper *Polynesian*, printed in Honolulu, advocated that the U.S. establish a naval base in Hawaii for the protection of American citizens engaged in the whaling industry. The British Hawaiian Minister of Foreign Affairs Robert Crichton Wyllie, remarked in 1840 that "... my opinion is that the tide of events rushes on to annexation to the United States."

From the conclusion of the Civil War, to the purchase of Alaska, to the increased importance of the Pacific states, the projected trade with countries in Asia and the desire for a

duty-free market for Hawaiian staples, Hawaiian trade expanded. In 1865, the North Pacific Squadron was formed to embrace the western coast and Hawaii. *Lackawanna* in the following year was assigned to cruise among the islands, "a locality of great and increasing interest and importance." This vessel surveyed the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands toward Japan.

As a result, the United States claimed Midway Island. The Secretary of the Navy was able to write in his annual report of 1868, that in November 1867, 42 American flags flew over whaleships and merchant vessels in Honolulu to only six of other nations. This increased activity caused the permanent assignment of at least one warship to Hawaiian waters. It also praised Midway Island as possessing a harbor surpassing Honolulu's. In the following year, Congress approved an appropriation of \$50,000 on March 1, 1869, to deepen the approaches to this harbor.

After 1868, when the Commander of the Pacific Fleet visited the islands to look after American interests, naval officers played an important role in internal affairs. They served as arbitrators in business disputes, negotiators of trade agreements and defenders of law and order.

Periodic voyages among the islands and to the mainland aboard U.S. warships were arranged for members of the Hawaiian royal family and important island government officials. When King Lunalilo died in 1873, negotiations were underway for the cession of Pearl Harbor as a port for the duty-free export of sugar to the U.S. With the election of King Kalākaua in March 1874, riots prompted landing of sailors

from USS *Tuscarora* and *Portsmouth*. The British warship, HMS *Tenedos*, also landed a token force. During the reign of King Kalākaua the United States was granted exclusive rights to enter Pearl Harbor and to establish "a coaling and repair station."

Although this treaty continued in force until August 1898, the U.S. did not fortify Pearl Harbor as a naval base. As it had for 60 years, the shallow entrance constituted a formidable barrier against the use of the deep protected waters of the inner harbor.

The United States and the Hawaiian Kingdom signed the Reciprocity Treaty of 1875 as supplemented by Convention on December 6, 1884. This treaty was ratified in 1887. On January 20, 1887, the United States Senate allowed the Navy the exclusive right to maintain a coaling and repair station at Pearl Harbor. (The US took possession on November 9 that year). The Spanish–American War of 1898 and the desire for the United States to have a permanent presence in the Pacific both contributed to the decision.

### **Naval presence (1899–present)**

Following the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the United States Navy established a base on the island in 1899. On December 7, 1941, the base was attacked by the Imperial Japanese Navy airplanes and midget submarines, causing the American entry into World War II. There was no meaningful plan for the air defense of Hawaii, for American commanders had no understanding of the capabilities and proper employment of air power. As it was, had the Pacific Fleet acted

on the war warnings it undoubtedly would have sortied and been at sea on December 7, where the major ships would have been sunk in deep water, making salvage impossible.

Shortly after the devastating Japanese surprise attack at Pearl Harbor two American military commanders, Lt. Gen. Walter Short and Adm. Husband Kimmel, were demoted of their full ranks. The two American commanders later sought to restore their reputations and full ranks.

## **Post-World War II**

Over the years, Pearl Harbor remained a main base for the US Pacific Fleet after World War II along with Naval Base San Diego. In 2010, the Navy and the Air Force merged their two nearby bases; Pearl Harbor joined with Hickam Air Force Base to create Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

In December 2016, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe made a joint visit to Pearl Harbor with US President Barack Obama. This trip marked the 75th anniversary of the attack and was the first official visit by a sitting Japanese leader.

In December 2019, a US Navy sailor killed two civilian workers and wounded another, before shooting himself at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard.

On May 11, 2020, it was announced that a joint expedition by Ocean Infinity, with its ship the *Pacific Constructor*, and the operations center of SEARCH Inc. headed by Dr. James Delgado, had discovered *Nevada's* wreck. It is located at a depth of 15,400 feet (4,700 m) off the coast of Hawaii and about 65 nautical miles southwest of Pearl Harbor.



Archaeologists also documented the two tripod masts, portions of the bridge, sections of deck and superstructure, and a tank placed on the deck for the atomic bomb tests. The hull was still painted and the number "36" was visible on the stern. As a result of the global health crisis COVID-19 pandemic, the ship has stayed at sea on a variety of taskings.

## **Chapter 5**

# **Pacific War**

The Pacific War, sometimes called the Asia–Pacific War, was the theater of World War II that was fought in Asia, the Pacific Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and Oceania. It was geographically the largest theater of the war, including the vast Pacific Ocean theater, the South West Pacific theater, the South-East Asian theater, the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the Soviet–Japanese War.

The Second Sino-Japanese War between the Empire of Japan and the Republic of China had been in progress since 7 July 1937, with hostilities dating back as far as 19 September 1931 with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. However, it is more widely accepted that the Pacific War itself began on 7 December (8 December Japanese time) 1941, when the Japanese invaded Thailand and attacked the British colonies of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong as well as the United States military and naval bases in Hawaii, Wake Island, Guam, and the Philippines.

The Pacific War saw the Allies pitted against Japan, the latter aided by Thailand and to a lesser extent by the Axis allies, Germany and Italy. Fighting consisted of some of the largest naval battles in history, and incredibly fierce battles and war crimes across Asia and the Pacific Islands, resulting in immense loss of human life. The war culminated in massive Allied air raids over Japan, and the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, accompanied by the Soviet Union's declaration of war and invasion of Manchuria and other

territories on 9 August 1945, causing the Japanese to announce an intent to surrender on 15 August 1945. The formal surrender of Japan ceremony took place aboard the battleship USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay on 2 September 1945. After the war, Japan lost all rights and titles to its former possessions in Asia and the Pacific, and its sovereignty was limited to the four main home islands and other minor islands as determined by the Allies. Japan's Shinto Emperor relinquished much of his authority and his divine status through the Shinto Directive in order to pave the way for extensive cultural and political reforms.

### **Names for the war**

In Allied countries during the war, the "Pacific War" was not usually distinguished from World War II in general, or was known simply as the *War against Japan*. In the United States, the term *Pacific Theater* was widely used, although this was a misnomer in relation to the Allied campaign in Burma, the war in China and other activities within the South-East Asian Theater. However, the US Armed Forces considered the China-Burma-India Theater to be distinct from the Asiatic-Pacific Theater during the conflict.

Japan used the name *Greater East Asia War* (大東亜戦争, *Dai Tō-A Sensō*), as chosen by a cabinet decision on 10 December 1941, to refer to both the war with the Western Allies and the ongoing war in China. This name was released to the public on 12 December, with an explanation that it involved Asian nations achieving their independence from the Western powers through armed forces of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese officials integrated what they called the

*Japan–China Incident* (日支事変, *NisshiJihen*) into the Greater East Asia War. During the Allied military occupation of Japan (1945–52), these Japanese terms were prohibited in official documents, although their informal usage continued, and the war became officially known as the Pacific War (太平洋戦争, *TaiheiyōSensō*). In Japan, the *Fifteen Years' War* (十五年戦争, *JūgonenSensō*) is also used, referring to the period from the Mukden Incident of 1931 through 1945.

## **Allies**

The major Allied participants were China, the United States and the British Empire. China had already been engaged in bloody war against Japan since 1937 including both the KMT government National Revolutionary Army and CCP units, such as the guerrilla Eighth Route Army, New Fourth Army, as well as smaller groups. The United States and its territories, including the Philippine Commonwealth, entered the war after being attacked by Japan. The British Empire was also a major belligerent consisting of British troops along with large numbers of colonial troops from the armed forces of India as well as from Burma, Malaya, Fiji, Tonga; in addition to troops from Australia, New Zealand and Canada. The Dutch government-in-exile (as the possessor of the Dutch East Indies) were also involved. All of these were members of the Pacific War Council.

Mexico provided some air support in the form of the 201st Fighter Squadron and Free France sent naval support in the form of *Le Triomphant* and later the *Richelieu*. From 1944 the French commando group Corps Léger d'Intervention also took part in resistance operations in Indochina. French Indochinese

forces faced Japanese forces in a coup in 1945. The commando corps continued to operate after the coup until liberation. Some active pro-allied guerrillas in Asia included the Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army, the Korean Liberation Army, the Free Thai Movement and the Việt Minh.

The Soviet Union fought two short, undeclared border conflicts with Japan in 1938 and again in 1939, then remained neutral through the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact of April 1941, until August 1945 when it (and Mongolia) joined the rest of the Allies and invaded the territory of Manchukuo, China, Inner Mongolia, the Japanese protectorate of Korea and Japanese-claimed territory such as South Sakhalin.

### **Axis powers and aligned states**

The Axis-aligned states which assisted Japan included the authoritarian government of Thailand, which formed a cautious alliance with the Japanese in 1941, when Japanese forces issued the government with an ultimatum following the Japanese invasion of Thailand. The leader of Thailand, PlaekPhibunsongkhram, became greatly enthusiastic about the alliance after decisive Japanese victories in the Malayan campaign and in 1942 sent the Phayap Army to assist the invasion of Burma, where former Thai territory that had been annexed by Britain were reoccupied (Occupied Malayan regions were similarly reintegrated into Thailand in 1943). The Allies supported and organized an underground anti-Japanese resistance group, known as the Free Thai Movement, after the Thai ambassador to the United States had refused to hand over the declaration of war. Because of this, after the surrender in 1945, the stance of the United States was that Thailand should

be treated as a puppet of Japan and be considered an occupied nation rather than as an ally. This was done in contrast to the British stance towards Thailand, who had faced them in combat as they invaded British territory, and the United States had to block British efforts to impose a punitive peace.

Also involved were members of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, which included the Manchukuo Imperial Army and Collaborationist Chinese Army of the Japanese puppet states of Manchukuo (consisting of most of Manchuria), and the collaborationist Wang Jingwei regime (which controlled the coastal regions of China), respectively. In the Burma campaign, other members, such as the anti-British Indian National Army of Free India and the Burma National Army of the State of Burma were active and fighting alongside their Japanese allies.

Moreover, Japan conscripted many soldiers from its colonies of Korea and Taiwan. Collaborationist security units were also formed in Hong Kong (reformed ex-colonial police), Singapore, the Philippines (also a member of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere), the Dutch East Indies (the PETA), British Malaya, British Borneo, former French Indochina (after the overthrow of the French regime in 1945) (the Vichy French had previously allowed the Japanese to use bases in French Indochina beginning in 1941, following an invasion) as well as Timorese militia. These units assisted the Japanese war effort in their respective territories.

Germany and Italy both had limited involvement in the Pacific War. The German and the Italian navies operated submarines and raiding ships in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, notably the

MonsunGruppe. The Italians had access to concession territory naval bases in China which they utilized (and which was later ceded to collaborationist China by the Italian Social Republic in late 1943). After Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor and the subsequent declarations of war, both navies had access to Japanese naval facilities.

## **Theaters**

Between 1942 and 1945, there were four main areas of conflict in the Pacific War: China, the Central Pacific, South-East Asia and the South West Pacific. US sources refer to two theaters within the Pacific War: the Pacific theater and the China Burma India Theater (CBI). However these were not operational commands.

In the Pacific, the Allies divided operational control of their forces between two supreme commands, known as Pacific Ocean Areas and Southwest Pacific Area. In 1945, for a brief period just before the Japanese surrender, the Soviet Union and Mongolia engaged Japanese forces in Manchuria and northeast China.

The Imperial Japanese Navy did not integrate its units into permanent theater commands. The Imperial Japanese Army, which had already created the Kwantung Army to oversee its occupation of Manchukuo and the China Expeditionary Army during the Second Sino-Japanese War, created the Southern Expeditionary Army Group at the outset of its conquests of South East Asia. This headquarters controlled the bulk of the Japanese Army formations which opposed the Western Allies in the Pacific and South East Asia.

# Historical background

## Conflict between China and Japan

- By 1937, Japan controlled Manchuria and it was also ready to move deeper into China. The Marco Polo Bridge Incident on 7 July 1937 provoked full-scale war between China and Japan. The Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communists suspended their civil war in order to form a nominal alliance against Japan, and the Soviet Union quickly lent support by providing large amounts of materiel to Chinese troops. In August 1937, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek deployed his best army to fight about 300,000 Japanese troops in Shanghai, but, after three months of fighting, Shanghai fell. The Japanese continued to push the Chinese forces back, capturing the capital Nanjing in December 1937 and conducted the Nanjing Massacre. In March 1938, Nationalist forces won their first victory at Taierzhuang, but then the city of Xuzhou was taken by the Japanese in May. In June 1938, Japan deployed about 350,000 troops to invade Wuhan and captured it in October. The Japanese achieved major military victories, but world opinion—in particular in the United States—condemned Japan, especially after the *Panay* incident.

In 1939, Japanese forces tried to push into the Soviet Far East from Manchuria. They were soundly defeated in the Battle of KhalkhinGol by a mixed Soviet and Mongolian force led by



Georgy Zhukov. This stopped Japanese expansion to the north, and Soviet aid to China ended as a result of the signing of the Soviet–Japanese Neutrality Pact at the beginning of its war against Germany.

In September 1940, Japan decided to cut China's only land line to the outside world by seizing French Indochina, which was controlled at the time by Vichy France. Japanese forces broke their agreement with the Vichy administration and fighting broke out, ending in a Japanese victory. On 27 September Japan signed a military alliance with Germany and Italy, becoming one of the three main Axis Powers. In practice, there was little coordination between Japan and Germany until 1944, by which time the US was deciphering their secret diplomatic correspondence.

The war entered a new phase with the unprecedented defeat of the Japanese at the Battle of Suixian–Zaoyang, 1st Battle of Changsha, Battle of Kunlun Pass and Battle of Zaoyi. After these victories, Chinese nationalist forces launched a large-scale counter-offensive in early 1940; however, due to its low military-industrial capacity, it was repulsed by the Imperial Japanese Army in late March 1940. In August 1940, Chinese communists launched an offensive in Central China; in retaliation, Japan instituted the "Three Alls Policy" ("Kill all, Burn all, Loot all") in occupied areas to reduce human and material resources for the communists.

By 1941 the conflict had become a stalemate. Although Japan had occupied much of northern, central, and coastal China, the Nationalist Government had retreated to the interior with a provisional capital set up at Chungking while the Chinese

communists remained in control of base areas in Shaanxi. In addition, Japanese control of northern and central China was somewhat tenuous, in that Japan was usually able to control railroads and the major cities ("points and lines"), but did not have a major military or administrative presence in the vast Chinese countryside.

The Japanese found its aggression against the retreating and regrouping Chinese army was stalled by the mountainous terrain in southwestern China while the Communists organised widespread guerrilla and saboteur activities in northern and eastern China behind the Japanese front line.

Japan sponsored several puppet governments, one of which was headed by Wang Jingwei. However, its policies of brutality toward the Chinese population, of not yielding any real power to these regimes, and of supporting several rival governments failed to make any of them a viable alternative to the Nationalist government led by Chiang Kai-shek.

Conflicts between Chinese Communist and Nationalist forces vying for territory control behind enemy lines culminated in a major armed clash in January 1941, effectively ending their co-operation.

Japanese strategic bombing efforts mostly targeted large Chinese cities such as Shanghai, Wuhan, and Chongqing, with around 5,000 raids from February 1938 to August 1943 in the later case. Japan's strategic bombing campaigns devastated Chinese cities extensively, killing 260,000–350,934 non-combatants.

## **Tensions between Japan and the West**

From as early as 1935 Japanese military strategists had concluded the Dutch East Indies were, because of their oil reserves, of considerable importance to Japan. By 1940 they had expanded this to include Indochina, Malaya, and the Philippines within their concept of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Japanese troop build ups in Hainan, Taiwan, and Haiphong were noted, Imperial Japanese Army officers were openly talking about an inevitable war, and Admiral Sankichi Takahashi was reported as saying a showdown with the United States was necessary.

In an effort to discourage Japanese militarism, Western powers including Australia, the United States, Britain, and the Dutch government in exile, which controlled the petroleum-rich Dutch East Indies, stopped selling oil, iron ore, and steel to Japan, denying it the raw materials needed to continue its activities in China and French Indochina. In Japan, the government and nationalists viewed these embargos as acts of aggression; imported oil made up about 80% of domestic consumption, without which Japan's economy, let alone its military, would grind to a halt. The Japanese media, influenced by military propagandists, began to refer to the embargoes as the "ABCD ("American-British-Chinese-Dutch") encirclement" or "ABCD line".

Faced with a choice between economic collapse and withdrawal from its recent conquests (with its attendant loss of face), the Japanese Imperial General Headquarters (GHQ) began planning for a war with the Western powers in April or May 1941.

## **Japanese preparations**

In preparation for the war against the United States, which would be decided at sea and in the air, Japan increased its naval budget as well as putting large formations of the Army and its attached air force under navy command. While formerly the IJA consumed the lion's share of the state's military budget due to the secondary role of the IJN in Japan's campaign against China (with a 73/27 split in 1940), from 1942 to 1945 there would instead be a roughly 60/40 split in funds between the army and the navy. Japan's key objective during the initial part of the conflict was to seize economic resources in the Dutch East Indies and Malaya which offered Japan a way to escape the effects of the Allied embargo. This was known as the Southern Plan. It was also decided—because of the close relationship between the United Kingdom and United States, and the (mistaken) belief that the US would inevitably become involved—that Japan would also require taking the Philippines, Wake and Guam.

Japanese planning was for fighting a limited war where Japan would seize key objectives and then establish a defensive perimeter to defeat Allied counterattacks, which in turn would lead to a negotiated peace. The attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, by carrier-based aircraft of the Combined Fleet was intended to give the Japanese time to complete a perimeter.

The early period of the war was divided into two operational phases. The First Operational Phase was further divided into three separate parts in which the major objectives of the Philippines, British Malaya, Borneo, Burma, Rabaul and the

Dutch East Indies would be occupied. The Second Operational Phase called for further expansion into the South Pacific by seizing eastern New Guinea, New Britain, Fiji, Samoa, and strategic points in the Australian area. In the Central Pacific, Midway was targeted as were the Aleutian Islands in the North Pacific. Seizure of these key areas would provide defensive depth and deny the Allies staging areas from which to mount a counteroffensive.

By November these plans were essentially complete, and were modified only slightly over the next month. Japanese military planners' expectation of success rested on the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union being unable to effectively respond to a Japanese attack because of the threat posed to each by Germany; the Soviet Union was even seen as unlikely to commence hostilities.

The Japanese leadership was aware that a total military victory in a traditional sense against the US was impossible; the alternative would be negotiating for peace after their initial victories, which would recognize Japanese hegemony in Asia. In fact, the Imperial GHQ noted, should acceptable negotiations be reached with the Americans, the attacks were to be canceled—even if the order to attack had already been given. The Japanese leadership looked to base the conduct of the war against America on the historical experiences of the successful wars against China (1894–95) and Russia (1904–05), in both of which a strong continental power was defeated by reaching limited military objectives, not by total conquest.

They also planned, should the United States transfer its Pacific Fleet to the Philippines, to intercept and attack this fleet *en*

*route* with the Combined Fleet, in keeping with all Japanese Navy prewar planning and doctrine. If the United States or Britain attacked first, the plans further stipulated the military were to hold their positions and wait for orders from GHQ. The planners noted that attacking the Philippines and British Malaya still had possibilities of success, even in the worst case of a combined preemptive attack including Soviet forces.

## **Japanese offensives, 1941–42**

Following prolonged tensions between Japan and the Western powers, units of the Imperial Japanese Navy and Imperial Japanese Army launched simultaneous surprise attacks on the United States and the British Empire on 7 December (8 December in Asia/West Pacific time zones).

The locations of this first wave of Japanese attacks included the American territories of Hawaii, the Philippines, Guam, and Wake Island and the British territories of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

Concurrently, Japanese forces invaded southern and eastern Thailand and were resisted for several hours, before the Thai government signed an armistice and entered an alliance with Japan. Although Japan declared war on the United States and the British Empire, the declaration was not delivered until after the attacks began. Subsequent attacks and invasions followed during December 1941 and early 1942 leading to the occupation of American, British, Dutch and Australian territories and air raids on the Australian mainland. The Allies suffered many disastrous defeats in the first six months of the war.

## **Attack on Pearl Harbor**

In the early hours of 7 December (Hawaiian time), Japan launched a major surprise carrier-based air strike on Pearl Harbor in Honolulu without explicit warning, which crippled the U.S. Pacific Fleet, left eight American battleships out of action, destroyed 188 American aircraft, and caused the deaths of 2,403 Americans. The Japanese had gambled that the United States, when faced with such a sudden and massive blow and loss of life, would agree to a negotiated settlement and allow Japan free rein in Asia. This gamble did not pay off. American losses were less serious than initially thought: the American aircraft carriers, which would prove to be more important than battleships, were at sea, and vital naval infrastructure (fuel oil tanks, shipyard facilities, and a power station), submarine base, and signals intelligence units were unscathed, and the fact the bombing happened while the US was not officially at war anywhere in the world caused a wave of outrage across the United States. Japan's fallback strategy, relying on a war of attrition to make the US come to terms, was beyond the IJN's capabilities.

Before the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 800,000-member America First Committee vehemently opposed any American intervention in the European conflict, even as America sold military aid to Britain and the Soviet Union through the Lend-Lease program. Opposition to war in the US vanished after the attack. On 8 December, the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, and the Netherlands declared war on Japan, followed by China and Australia the next day. Four days after Pearl Harbor, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States, drawing the country into a two-theater war. This is widely

agreed to be a grand strategic blunder, as it abrogated both the benefit Germany gained by Japan's distraction of the US and the reduction in aid to Britain, which both Congress and Hitler had managed to avoid during over a year of mutual provocation, which would otherwise have resulted.

### **South-East Asian campaigns of 1941–42**

Thailand, with its territory already serving as a springboard for the Malayan Campaign, surrendered within 5 hours of the Japanese invasion. The government of Thailand formally allied with Japan on 21 December. To the south, the Imperial Japanese Army had seized the British colony of Penang on 19 December, encountering little resistance.

Hong Kong was attacked on 8 December and fell on 25 December 1941, with Canadian forces and the Royal Hong Kong Volunteers playing an important part in the defense. American bases on Guam and Wake Island were lost at around the same time. British, Australian, and Dutch forces, already drained of personnel and matériel by two years of war with Germany, and heavily committed in the Middle East, North Africa, and elsewhere, were unable to provide much more than token resistance to the battle-hardened Japanese. Two major British warships, HMS *Repulse* and HMS *Prince of Wales*, were sunk by a Japanese air attack off Malaya on 10 December 1941.

Following the Declaration by United Nations (the first official use of the term United Nations) on 1 January 1942, the Allied governments appointed the British General Sir Archibald Wavell to the American-British-Dutch-Australian Command



(ABDACOM), a supreme command for Allied forces in Southeast Asia. This gave Wavell nominal control of a huge force, albeit thinly spread over an area from Burma to the Philippines to northern Australia. Other areas, including India, Hawaii, and the rest of Australia remained under separate local commands. On 15 January, Wavell moved to Bandung in Java to assume control of ABDACOM.

- In January, Japan invaded British Burma, the Dutch East Indies, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and captured Manila, Kuala Lumpur and Rabaul. After being driven out of Malaya, Allied forces in Singapore attempted to resist the Japanese during the Battle of Singapore, but were forced to surrender to the Japanese on 15 February 1942; about 130,000 Indian, British, Australian and Dutch personnel became prisoners of war. The pace of conquest was rapid: Bali and Timor also fell in February. The rapid collapse of Allied resistance left the "ABDA area" split in two. Wavell resigned from ABDACOM on 25 February, handing control of the ABDA Area to local commanders and returning to the post of Commander-in-Chief, India.

Meanwhile, Japanese aircraft had all but eliminated Allied air power in Southeast Asia and were making air attacks on northern Australia, beginning with a psychologically devastating but militarily insignificant bombing of the city of Darwin on 19 February, which killed at least 243 people.

At the Battle of the Java Sea in late February and early March, the Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) inflicted a resounding defeat

on the main ABDA naval force, under Admiral Karel Doorman. The Dutch East Indies campaign subsequently ended with the surrender of Allied forces on Java and Sumatra.

In March and April, a powerful IJN carrier force launched a raid into the Indian Ocean. British Royal Navy bases in Ceylon were hit and the aircraft carrier HMS *Hermes* and other Allied ships were sunk. The attack forced the Royal Navy to withdraw to the western part of the Indian Ocean. This paved the way for a Japanese assault on Burma and India.

In Burma, the British, under intense pressure, made a fighting retreat from Rangoon to the Indo-Burmese border. This cut the Burma Road, which was the western Allies' supply line to the Chinese Nationalists. In March 1942, the Chinese Expeditionary Force started to attack Japanese forces in northern Burma. On 16 April, 7,000 British soldiers were encircled by the Japanese 33rd Division during the Battle of Yenangyaung and rescued by the Chinese 38th Division, led by Sun Li-jen. Cooperation between the Chinese Nationalists and the Communists had waned from its zenith at the Battle of Wuhan, and the relationship between the two had gone sour as both attempted to expand their areas of operation in occupied territories. The Japanese exploited this lack of unity to press ahead in their offensives.

## **Philippines**

On 8 December 1941, Japanese bombers struck American airfields on Luzon. They caught most of the planes on the ground, destroying 103 aircraft, more than half of the US air strength. Two days later, further raids led to the destruction of

the Cavite Naval Yard, south of Manila. By 13 December, Japanese attacks had wrecked every major airfield and virtually annihilated American air power.

During the previous month before the start of hostilities, a part of the US Asiatic Fleet had been sent to the southern Philippines. However, with little air protection, the remaining surface vessels in the Philippines, especially the larger ships, were sent to Java or to Australia. With their position also equally untenable, the remaining American bombers flew to Australia in mid-December. The only forces that remained to defend the Philippines were the ground troops, a few fighter aircraft, about 30 submarines, and a few small vessels.

On 10 December, Japanese forces began a series of small-scale landings on Luzon. The main landings by the 14th Army took place at Lingayen Gulf on 22 December, with the bulk of the 16th Infantry Division. Another large second landing took place two days later at Lamon Bay, south of Manila, by the 48th infantry Division. As the Japanese troops converged on Manila, General Douglas MacArthur began executing plans to make a final stand on the Bataan Peninsula and the Island of Corregidor in order to deny the use of Manila Bay to the Japanese. A series of withdrawal actions brought his troops safely into Bataan, while the Japanese entered Manila unopposed on 2 January 1942.

On 7 January, the Japanese attacked Bataan. After some initial success, they were stalled by disease and casualties, but they could be reinforced while the Americans and Filipinos could not. On 11 March 1942, under orders from President Roosevelt, MacArthur left Corregidor for Australia, and

Lieutenant General Jonathan M. Wainwright assumed command in the Philippines. The defenders on Bataan, running low on ammunition and supplies, could not hold back a final Japanese offensive.

Consequently, Bataan fell on 9 April, with the 76,000 American and Filipino prisoners of war being subjected to a grueling 66-mile (106-km) ordeal that came to be known as the Bataan Death March. On the night of 5–6 May, after an intensive aerial and artillery bombardment of Corregidor, the Japanese landed on the island and General Wainwright surrendered on 6 May. In the southern Philippines, where key ports and airfields had already been seized by the Japanese, the remaining American-Filipino forces surrendered on 9 May.

US and Filipino forces resisted in the Philippines until 9 May 1942, when more than 80,000 soldiers were ordered to surrender. By this time, General Douglas MacArthur, who had been appointed Supreme Allied Commander South West Pacific, had been withdrawn to Australia. The US Navy, under Admiral Chester Nimitz, had responsibility for the rest of the Pacific Ocean. This divided command had unfortunate consequences for the commerce war, and consequently, the war itself.

### **Threat to Australia**

In late 1941, as the Japanese struck at Pearl Harbor, most of Australia's best forces were committed to the fight against Axis forces in the Mediterranean Theatre. Australia was ill-prepared for an attack, lacking armaments, modern fighter aircraft, heavy bombers, and aircraft carriers. While still calling for reinforcements from Churchill, the Australian Prime Minister

John Curtin called for American support with a historic announcement on 27 December 1941:

The Australian Government ... regards the Pacific struggle as primarily one in which the United States and Australia must have the fullest say in the direction of the democracies' fighting plan. Without inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom.

- — *Prime Minister John Curtin*

Australia had been shocked by the speedy and crushing collapse of British Malaya and the Fall of Singapore in which around 15,000 Australian soldiers were captured and became prisoners of war. Curtin predicted the "battle for Australia" would soon follow. The Japanese established a major base in the Australian Territory of New Guinea beginning with the capture of Rabaul on 23 January 1942. On 19 February 1942, Darwin suffered a devastating air raid, the first time the Australian mainland had been attacked. Over the following 19 months, Australia was attacked from the air almost 100 times.

Two battle-hardened Australian divisions were moving from the Middle East for Singapore. Churchill wanted them diverted to Burma, but Curtin insisted on a return to Australia. In early 1942 elements of the Imperial Japanese Navy proposed an invasion of Australia. The Imperial Japanese Army opposed the plan and it was rejected in favour of a policy of isolating Australia from the United States via blockade by advancing through the South Pacific. The Japanese decided upon a seaborne invasion of Port Moresby, capital of the Australian

Territory of Papua which would put all of Northern Australia within range of Japanese bomber aircraft.

President Franklin Roosevelt ordered General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines to formulate a Pacific defence plan with Australia in March 1942. Curtin agreed to place Australian forces under the command of MacArthur, who became Supreme Commander, South West Pacific. MacArthur moved his headquarters to Melbourne in March 1942 and American troops began massing in Australia. Enemy naval activity reached Sydney in late May 1942, when Japanese midget submarines launched a raid on Sydney Harbour. On 8 June 1942, two Japanese submarines briefly shelled Sydney's eastern suburbs and the city of Newcastle.