



# World War II: A Snapshot of History



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# Rise of the Nazis

Hard times followed World War I. Germany had lost the war and had to pay those who won. German money lost value and banks were forced to shut. Factories closed down. People lost jobs and hope. They turned to the Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler, who promised to make Germany great.

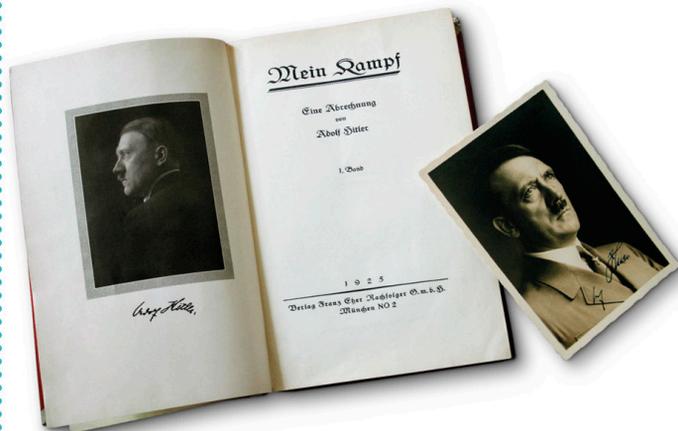
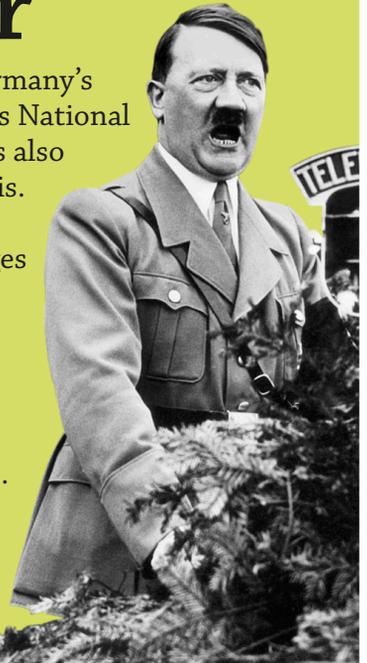
## RALLIES

The Nazis punished anyone who spoke against them. They held huge rallies (public meetings) to whip up support. Bands played, banners waved, soldiers and children marched. Hitler roused the crowds with fiery speeches. He promised Germany would rule Europe.



## Hitler

Hitler became Germany's leader in 1933. His National Socialist Party was also known as the Nazis. Hitler stopped paying war damages and promised the German people new factories and roads. He also formed a new army and air force. He talked about a new German empire, or "Reich".



## Hitler's ideas

Hitler was born in Austria. He joined Germany's army in World War I and led the Nazi Party from 1921. In 1924, he went to prison where he wrote *Mein Kampf* (My Struggle). This book blamed Jewish people and Communists for Germany's problems.

# Nazi symbols

The Nazis put their symbols everywhere, on flags, uniforms, buildings, and even on schools. Their signs included this eagle and the swastika, an ancient cross. The Nazis used these badges to show everyone who ruled Germany. While these symbols made some people proud, they scared others.



## OLYMPICS

The 1936 Olympic Games took place in Berlin. The Nazis used the Games to show off. Crowds cheered every German winner. However, the star of the Games was US athlete Jesse Owens. He won three gold medals, and Hitler walked out. Why? Owens was an African-American. His success went against Nazi racist ideas.



## Kristallnacht

On 9 November 1938, Nazi gangs destroyed Jewish shops and attacked and killed many Jewish people. Nazis painted messages of hate on walls and doors. They threw petrol bombs. They set shops on fire and smashed windows. Shattered glass covered the streets. It was called *Kristallnacht*, or the “Night of Glass”.



A woman in a factory setting, wearing a tan work shirt with a blue collar, a white cap, and safety glasses, is focused on welding a metal component. She is wearing dark gloves and holding a welding torch. The background shows another worker in a similar uniform, also working on a metal part. The scene is dimly lit, with the primary light source being the bright sparks from the welding process.

During the war, women learned new skills, such as metal welding. They needed to work quickly and carefully. A mistake making an aircraft part could cost lives.

# Wartime women

Governments from many countries called on women to help with the war effort. Women took on many jobs that men usually did. They worked in factories and drove buses and fire engines. They made planes, tanks, and other equipment. Some flew planes, cracked codes, and became secret agents. It changed the way women were viewed in the workplace forever.



## Lettice Curtis

Expert pilot Lettice Curtis flew fighter and bomber planes. Along with other British women, she took new planes to air bases. Women pilots in the USA and Australia did the same jobs.

## Land Army

To grow more food, people planted vegetables in parks and gardens. Women in Britain and the USA joined the Land Army to work on farms.



Posters, like this one from the USA, showed how women could help the war effort.



Women pilots of the Night Bomber Regiment.

## Soviet pilots

In the Soviet Union (Russia), women also fought in the war. This photograph shows a group of female pilots. Nicknamed *Nachthexen* (Night Witches) by the Nazis, these pilots dropped bombs in the dark. They switched off the engine and glided to the target. The enemy did not hear them coming, until the bombs fell.

## Luftwaffe

The German air force, or *Luftwaffe*, sent 1,500 aircraft into battle. They flew from airfields in France and Norway. German pilots had fought air battles before. They were confident that they would win.

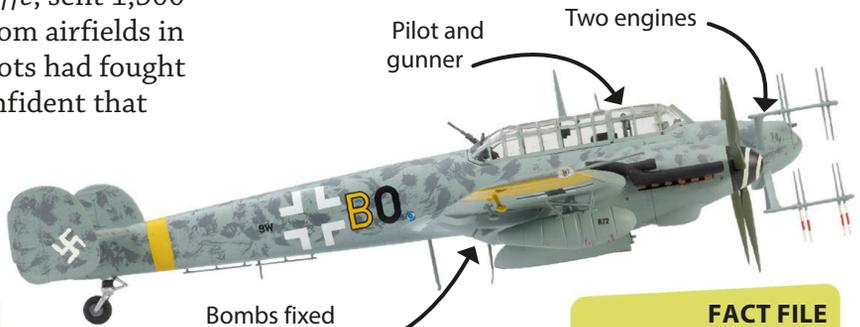
### FACT FILE

#### » Heinkel III

This German bomber's job was to bomb RAF airfields.

» **Crew:** five

» **Speed:** 400 kph (255 mph)



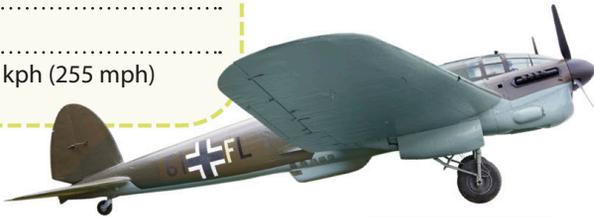
### FACT FILE

#### » Messerschmitt 110

This German fighter had seven guns. Its job was to protect the bombers.

» **Crew:** two

» **Speed:** 560 kph (349 mph)



British prime minister Winston Churchill tells parliament, "The Battle of Britain is about to begin".



Luftwaffe planes flew across the Channel to attack Britain.

German use codename *Adlertag* ("Eagle Day") for mass attack. Hundreds of planes battle over southern England.

18 June

10 July

27 July

12 August

13 August

Air battles begin after *Luftwaffe* planes bomb British ships in the English Channel.

RAF fights off German attacks on airfields and radar stations in England.

# Battle of Britain

Hitler planned to invade Britain in June, 1940. He knew he would have to destroy Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) first. Only then could the German army cross the English Channel, safe from air attack. The fierce fighting between the German and British air forces was called the Battle of Britain.

## Royal Air Force

Britain's RAF began the battle with about 500 fighter aircraft. Many pilots were young, but they learned quickly. Britain also had radar. Radar used sound waves to pick out enemy planes and show where they were.



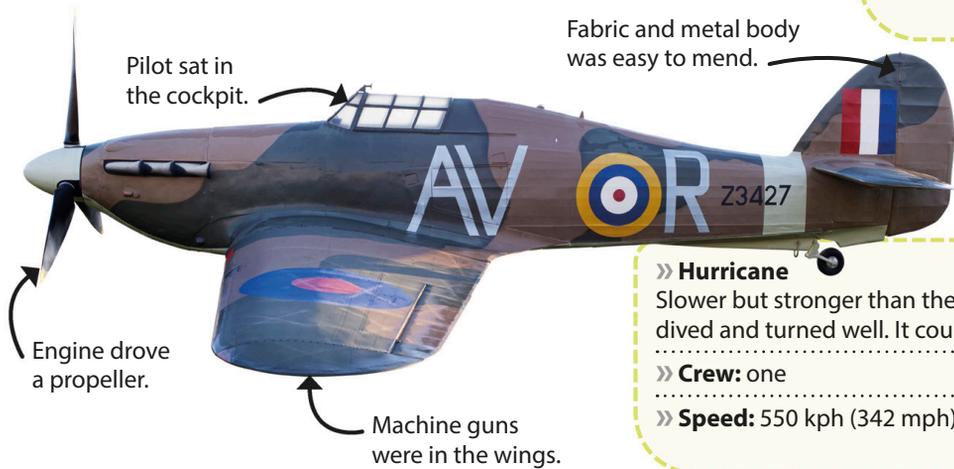
### FACT FILE

#### » Spitfire

This was the fastest British fighter. It had eight guns to shoot down enemy planes.

» **Crew:** one

» **Speed:** 570 kph (355 mph)



Pilot sat in the cockpit.

Fabric and metal body was easy to mend.

Engine drove a propeller.

Machine guns were in the wings.

### FACT FILE

#### » Hurricane

Slower but stronger than the Spitfire, the Hurricane dived and turned well. It could chase German bombers.

» **Crew:** one

» **Speed:** 550 kph (342 mph)



900 *Luftwaffe* planes fly in waves to bomb London.



RAF success forces the *Luftwaffe* to stop daylight raids, and only bomb at night.

15 August

RAF defeats *Luftwaffe* planes sent from Norway over northeast England.

7 September

17 September

Hitler orders his army to postpone the invasion of Britain.

30 September

31 October

The Battle of Britain is over. The *Luftwaffe* has lost nearly 1,900 planes, the RAF more than 1,000.

## Who won?

Throughout the summer of 1940, people on the ground watched battles in the sky, called dogfights. Bombs fell and planes crashed, but Hitler's army did not invade Britain. He told the *Luftwaffe* to bomb cities instead. The RAF had won the Battle of Britain. However, the war was not over yet.



This German Heinkel III was shot down and crashed in Essex.

# Propaganda

Countries didn't only use weapons to fight the war. Propaganda is the use of words and pictures to get people to think in a certain way. Governments on both sides used propaganda to make people do things for their country. They tried to make the enemy look bad and keep their side thinking they could win, sometimes by lying to people with news that was false.



This poster from the USA shows a female factory worker. It was used to get people to “roll up their sleeves” and work hard.



## Posters

Bold posters were used for many purposes by both sides. People were encouraged to work hard, look out for spies, and waste nothing. Posters were displayed at school, work, and in the street.

This Nazi poster urges French people to switch sides and join them. “You will win”, the poster promises.



American soldiers listening to news from back home.



## Radio

In the days before television, people got a lot of their news from the radio. War leaders used radio to give rousing speeches. The enemy tried to spread fear with fake news, but it often seemed far-fetched and not believable.



Cartoons like this made fun of the enemy.



## Newspapers

Governments told newspapers what to print, to make sure no war secrets slipped out. When battles were won, the headlines and stories were big. When battles were lost, they were much smaller. Adverts gave tips on keeping fit and safe.



German director Leni Riefenstahl made films of Nazi rallies and the Berlin Olympics.



## Film

People loved going to the cinema. Before a film, newsreels (short films) showed victories in battle and people working hard for the war effort. Many films had war themes.

**! WOW!**

**Allied planes  
dropped  
6 billion  
propaganda  
leaflets on  
Europe.**

## War savings

The war cost huge sums of money. Government posters asked people to buy War Bonds. This was a way of helping the war effort and saving money at the same time.



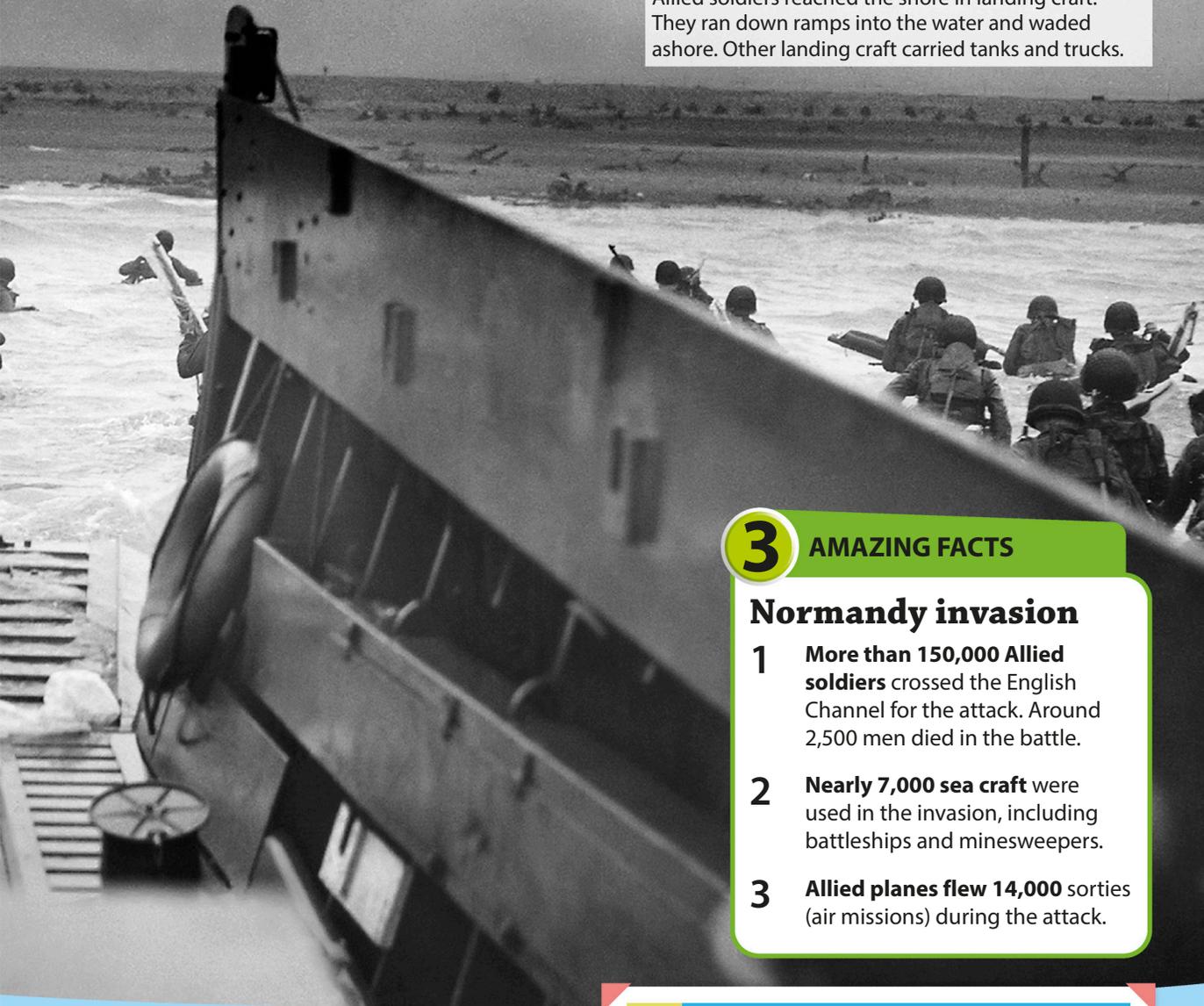


# D-Day

After five years of war, Germany ruled most of Europe. The Allies were now ready to free France. They carefully planned an attack and trained troops for months. On 6 June, 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy, France. This was D-Day. By 25 August, the Allies had freed Paris from Nazi rule. Within nine months, the war in Europe was over.



Allied soldiers reached the shore in landing craft. They ran down ramps into the water and waded ashore. Other landing craft carried tanks and trucks.



### 3 AMAZING FACTS

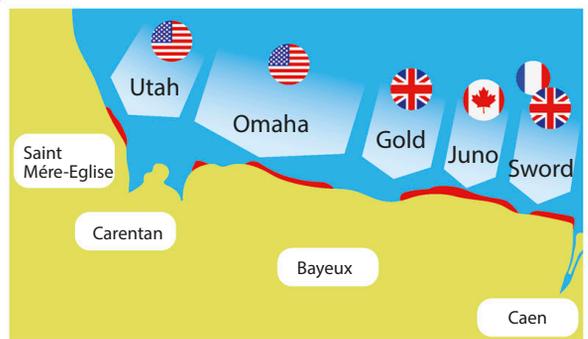
#### Normandy invasion

- 1 **More than 150,000 Allied soldiers** crossed the English Channel for the attack. Around 2,500 men died in the battle.
- 2 **Nearly 7,000 sea craft** were used in the invasion, including battleships and minesweepers.
- 3 **Allied planes flew 14,000 sorties** (air missions) during the attack.



#### Duck boat

The US DUKW was a boat with wheels. On land it became a truck. This helped allied troops land safely on D-Day.



This map shows where soldiers from the USA, Britain, Canada, and France landed. Each beach had a code name.

# War ends in Europe

After D-Day, the Allies knew they could win the war. They had more soldiers, tanks, and aircraft than Germany. In western Europe, the Americans, British, and other Allies freed France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The Russians moved in from the east, freeing Poland. By April, 1945, they had reached Berlin. On 8 May, 1945, the war in Europe was over.



The French celebrate their freedom in 1944

## Paris free

French troops fought alongside the Allied army. On 25 August, 1944, crowds cheered as French troops drove into Paris. The Germans had left. Soon afterwards, all of France was free.



## Secret weapons

Germany had secret weapons, such as V-1s, which were flying bombs. V-2s, like this one, were supersonic rockets. They came too late to change the war.

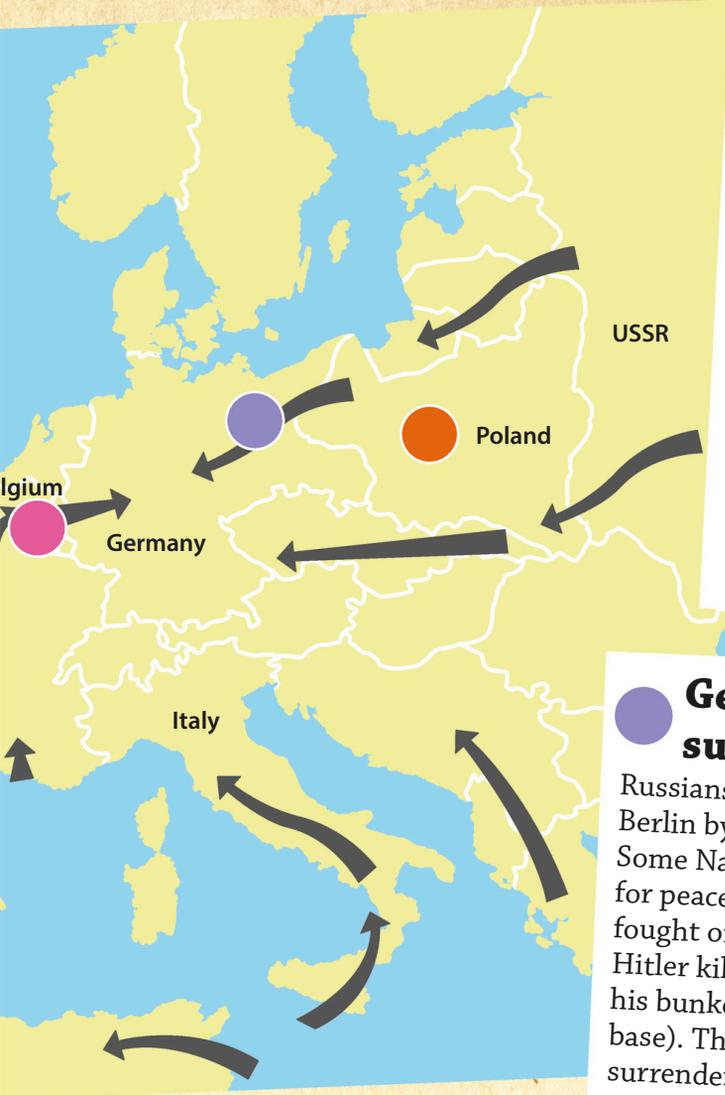
This map shows how the Allies attacked from 1943 to 1945, moving towards Germany.

KEY:  
Allied attacks



## Battle of the Bulge

Bad weather in December, 1944, stopped Allied planes flying. German soldiers attacked in Belgium. They pushed into the Allied line, making a “bulge”. Then Allied bombers got back in the air. The German attack in the west fizzled out.



Russian Katyusha rocket launcher

## Red rockets

Russia's Red Army fought across Poland and into Germany. Russian tanks, planes, and rockets destroyed German towns and villages. Many people fled west before the Red Army arrived.

## German surrender

Russians were fighting in Berlin by January, 1945. Some Nazis still hoped for peace, but others fought on. On 30 April, Hitler killed himself in his bunker (underground base). The German army surrendered days later.



US tank in the Battle of the Bulge



## VE Day

People celebrated Victory in Europe Day (VE Day) on 8 May, 1945. They danced, sang, and cheered. People waved flags, and held street parties. They also remembered. Six long years of war had left many homeless, hurt, or dead.

## Acknowledgements

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