



Historical Context

The Holocaust is a complicated, multi-faceted world event that remains difficult to grasp for many students and teachers alike. The following material will provide context that educators can use to help students better understand the material that will be discussed in the Texas Liberators Oral History Project lesson. Lengthy by necessity, educators should have a good grasp on the following material, although it is expected that only small portions may be used in the limited time available in the classroom.

GENOCIDE AND THE HOLOCAUST

The origins of genocide have been buried in the unrecorded past, existing throughout history and affecting all races of people and all nationalities. The term was invented by a twentieth century Polish writer and attorney, Raphael Lemkin, who had escaped from the Nazi Regime during the Holocaust (The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The word “genocide” contains the Greek word **genos** which means race or people, and the Latin suffix **cide** which means to kill (Stanton). He described the act as “...a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves.” (USHMM).

Genocide has become an international human rights problem that has affected all races and nationalities. The most infamous of all genocides was the **Holocaust**.

The term Holocaust means “sacrifice by fire” and refers to the Nazis’ merciless persecution and the systematic, state-sponsored destruction of the Jewish people under the dictatorship of Adolf Hitler. 11 million people were killed during the Holocaust, of those, six million were Jews. That was approximately two-thirds of all Jews living in Europe at that time. Victims of Nazi tyranny also included the disabled, Poles, Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, Soviet prisoners of war, and political opponents. These groups were targeted for mainly for ideological or racial reasons.

Children were targeted for similar reasons. As many as 1.5 million children were murdered and over a million of them were Jewish (USHMM).

The inhumane treatment established during the Holocaust has caused this world to stand up and notice. Although “denial”, the final stage of genocide, still exists for some, the Holocaust gives us a startling view of how patriotic loyalty, peer pressure, fear, self-preservation, and blind obedience can be used to destroy the human spirit.

The Holocaust was a horrific tragedy that continues to affect lives today and sparks interest to answer the larger question as to why these events occurred. This massive crime is an example of what can happen when people are intolerant of the differences in others.



World War II

CAUSES

The brutality of World War I resulted in the deaths of nearly ten million soldiers. Europe was devastated and in ill repair as people struggled to recover from damages of property, industry, and life. The United States weathered better than most European countries since they entered the war toward its final stages. However, like the other participants of the Great War, the U.S. was not eager to embark on another world conflict. The Great Depression of the 1930s caused suffering for millions and had taken a toll on the United States as nations gradually discontinued paying their debts to the U.S., causing a feeling of betrayal and isolation. Poverty, resentment, and the rise of nationalism, tyranny, and military conquest all contributed to the rising dictatorships that would catapult more than 40 nations into the bloodiest and deadliest war the world has ever witnessed.

Most historians attribute the causes of World War II to the aftermath and unsettled disputes of the First World War. Following the war, the Allied powers gathered in France in 1919 to discuss how to deal with Germany and imposed a treaty that would hinder their recovery. As a result, when the Treaty of Versailles was presented on May 7, 1919, German leaders realized that the other powers saw them as the chief instigators of the Great War. According to the treaty, Germany was to give up territories, reduce their military, and lose significant industrial territories. The most critical point of the treaty – the clause that generated widespread humiliation and bitterness among the German people – was Article 231, also known as “The War Guilt Clause” (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Germany was forced to make an enormous amount of reparation payments. France in particular wanted to make sure Germany would not be able to rearm. The harsh terms of the Treaty of Versailles did not address nor fix the issues that had contributed to the outbreak of the First World War. Instead, it complicated communication and interactions among the European nations.

It was in this volatile environment that defeated and vulnerable nations became susceptible to leaders who embraced beliefs and ideals based on race, blood, nationalism, and intolerance. Among such men was Adolf Hitler, who inundated Germans with propaganda and touched them personally with messages of fear, hope, and hatred as he led the German people to mirror those same sentiments.

RISE OF NATIONALISM AND DICTATORIAL POWERS

In fulfilling his goal to unify Germany, Hitler would be assured of the support of his people while giving them a sense of nationalism and belonging. He believed Germans were part of a “superior” race – the Aryans – and “inferior” races should be eliminated. Hitler looked to Eastern Europe and made plans to conquer the land and ensure the survival of the “Aryan” German race. The Eastern European regions were seen to be populated by so-called inferior races such as the Slavs (Poles, Russians, Belorussians, Ukrainians), Central Asian ethnic groups, and the Jews (USHMM, 2007). As the Nazi sphere of influence expanded, Hitler planned to “systematically” conquer the world and acquire living space (*Lebensraum*) through expansionism, domination, and Nazism (Scholastic Inc.). Hitler had to ensure that Germany would have enough time to rearm and rebuild. One of his very first policies was to sign a non-aggression



pact with Poland as a way to keep Poland and France from becoming allies (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Hitler worried that this could lead to an armed conflict before Germany was fully prepared. However, Hitler was also extremely confident that a Polish invasion would be successful because of the Blitzkrieg, which would defeat the Polish armed forces quickly (Lightbody, 2011). Nazi Germany prepared to launch a war in the east to seize the territory that Hitler believed had been wrongly taken from Germany after The Great War. Other world powers appeased Hitler and the Nazis as a way to avoid starting another war. The epitome of this state of appeasement was when Italy, France, and Great Britain handed Czechoslovakia over to Nazi Germany under the terms of the Munich Agreement on September 28, 1938 (USHMM, 2007). Moreover, Great Britain and France were not prepared to engage in a war against Nazi Germany.

Beginning of World War II in Europe

Despite the invasion being a serious risk to Germany's economy and military strength – which had gradually built up over the years – the "Invasion of Poland", also known as the "September Campaign" or "1939 Defensive War", marked the beginning of World War II in Europe (Lightbody, 2011). On September 1st, Germany invaded Poland and blazed through its borders by igniting a "lightning war" (*Blitzkrieg*) in order to allow German troops and artillery to break through. This new military tactic allowed the Germans to defeat their opponents over the span of two years in a series of short campaigns. As a response to the invasion, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany two days later, fulfilling their promise to protect Poland's borders. On September 17th, Poland was invaded by the Soviet Union's Red Army from the east.

While Polish forces waited for support from France and the United Kingdom (which was too little too late), Germany gained an undisputed advantage, eventually defeating Poland and forcing them into a formal surrender. By the end of the campaign in October, Poland was split up between the Soviet Union and Germany, the Soviets controlling the eastern part of the country. Under the terms of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the Soviet Union received and annexed eastern Poland and incorporated Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and two provinces of Romania (USHMM, 2007). This temporary alliance kept Germany out of a two-front war and allowed them to focus on creating German settlements across eastern regions where ethnic Germans would be repatriated (USHMM, 2007).

After Italy's entrance to the war on June 10, 1940, it joined Japan and Germany in their alliance by signing the Tripartite Pact on September 27, 1940. These three nations would form the Axis alliance. Italy invaded the southern part of France on June 21st. They then proceeded to attack Greece in October. Benito Mussolini was extremely unsatisfied and bitter over the way Italy had been treated after World War I. Simultaneously, the Italians made their way to Egypt to engage the British forces occupying the region. Both of these campaigns would end up being disastrous for the Italians and would require Germany's aid.



Japanese Imperialism

Similar to Germany, Imperial Japan also used military conquest to rule and influence the regions of East Asia and the Pacific, and to establish itself as a major world power. It began with the invasion of Manchuria during September 1931. Like Western powers, Japan emerged from depression by the 1930s. The military consisted of young men from rural areas that had been hit hard by the depression. One of the contributing factors to Japan's resentment toward the Western nations was that the U.S. had vetoed their request to establish equality among the League of Nations. They greatly resented the racial slurs they were met with by the Western powers; however, the Japanese were far from being accepting of everyone as well. Even though many indigenous people saw them as liberators once they entered the islands colonized by European powers, the Japanese did not see themselves as representing Asia as a whole. Their own oppressive behavior and racism toward other Asians prompted resentment toward the Imperial Japanese military. Many who had started off as supporters of Japan quickly shifted their feelings when they were hit with the hard truth that Pan-Asian unity was a myth (Dower, 1986).

Japan was heavily dependent upon foreign trade and was hurt by the world depression. They felt there were unfair treaties imposed on them and wanted to establish themselves as an economic power. Between 1928 and 1932, Japan experienced several crises, among them an economic depression. Disillusionment with the government led to the rapid rise of ultra-nationalistic movements. The movements saw to it that Shinto priests and teachers be recruited in order to indoctrinate the citizens. The nationalism that surfaced in Japan incorporated ancient and contemporary principles (Shintoism) with European fascist ideals (History.com Staff).

Japan embraced imperialism, gaining wealth and resources through occupation and exploitation. In seeking expansion of its territory, Japan had already captured land in China, wanting to gain control of their valuable resources. In 1931, Japan invaded Manchuria and established the puppet state of Manchukuo. Though their actions were condemned by the League of Nations, nothing could be done to stop Japan, and they soon left the League. The heads of Imperial Japan came up with a Pan-Asian plan (later on becoming a myth) known as the "Greater Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere", which called for the unification of Asia against the Western powers (History.com Staff). However, Japan's own oppressive behavior toward other Asians reversed the sentiments and generated contempt toward the Imperial Japanese Army.

As a way to show the rest of the world that they were a serious contender for one of the world's superpowers, Japan targeted and invaded countries that were colonial outposts. The Pan-Asiatic slogans lured in the inhabitants of these regions and created a hostile sentiment toward the Western powers such as the Dutch, British, and Americans (Dower, 1986). In 1937, Japan had invaded Shanghai and seized Nanking, where one of the most brutal acts of the War in Asia occurred and resulted in the slaughter of 300,000 civilians: the "Rape of Nanking."

The U.S. kept an eye on the happenings in Asia as the war raged on. An oil embargo was placed by the U.S. on Japan after the Imperial General Headquarters refused to pull back from China and French Indochina. Fueled by the "Yellow Peril" sentiments of the Western countries that started centuries



before World War II, this gave the Japanese a pretext to engage in war with the U.S. (History.com Staff; Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race & Power in the Pacific War*, 1986). On December 7, 1941, the United States was attacked by Japan at Pearl Harbor.

Pearl Harbor

On the morning of December 7, 1941, Japanese warplanes bombarded the American naval base Pearl Harbor located in the island of Oahu, Hawaii. Once Mitsuo Fuchida, Japanese Navy captain, spotted land, he ordered his planes to get into position. At 7:55 a.m. the first wave of Japanese planes began their attack on the American Pacific fleet. The American ships and aircraft lay undefended as the planes swooped down, unleashing bombs and bullets on the unsuspecting base. Radio silence was broken as “Tora! Tora! Tora!” was announced. Within 2 hours of the attack, 5 battleships had been sunk and over a hundred aircraft had been destroyed. The damage to the fleet was staggering. More than two thousand men were dead, and 1,103 of them had been trapped in the battleship *Arizona* which sank almost immediately after a bomb exploded (Kennedy, 1999; Robinson, 2011).

The success of the surprise attack would allow Japan to continue its operation in Southeast Asia without interference from the U.S. However, the attack was not entirely successful due to two main factors. First, the U.S. Pacific Fleet carriers that were the initial targets were not stationed at Pearl Harbor. Second, Nagumo refused to go back for a final strike against the repair shops and fuel facilities that would have forced the U.S. Navy to retreat to bases on the West Coast (Kennedy, *The American People in World War II*, 1999). The following day, the U.S. declared war on Japan and then on the other Axis powers, German and Italy. The U.S., who had publicly declared neutrality until that point, had now joined World War II. President Roosevelt was pressured by the navy and public opinion the most to focus on the war against Japan. The public displayed racial animosity toward the Japanese, a sentiment that would characterize the brutality of the battles between Americans and Japanese on the islands. However, Roosevelt decided to give priority to Europe and focus on defeating Germany first.

A WORLD AT WAR

Western Europe was falling to the Nazis, and soon Great Britain would find herself alone. The Germans marched into France in May 1940. By June 17th, France signed an armistice and was out of the war, now being under Nazi occupation. After a successful invasion, Hitler began his plans to invade the Soviet Union under the false impression that Great Britain would give in to Germany’s demands. The day that France had been invaded was also the day that Winston Churchill became Prime Minister. Churchill quickly decided to prepare the country for war after they had suffered great losses in weapons and supplies. Even then, Great Britain refused to surrender. The Nazis had two options: they could bluff an invasion through means of propaganda and wearing down Great Britain psychologically and physically, or they could execute an actual invasion (Cruikshank, 2011).

Hitler issued Directive Number 16 which called for the invasion of England on July 16, 1940. The invasion would be codenamed Operation Sealion, and Hitler announced that forces would be ready to go by the 15th of August, 1940. The Battle of Britain was underway by the 12th. Operation Sealion would backfire



on the Germans due to poor intelligence and lack of action during the majority of July, which they had spent waiting for Great Britain to surrender. The British began to attack Berlin and forced the Luftwaffe to change their operation (History.com Staff, 2009). The Luftwaffe began to bomb London in response. The first attack was successful; the others would result in failure, which would be a heavy blow to the German fighters' morale (Cruikshank, 2011). British fighters appeared in large numbers and overwhelmed the Germans, resulting in major losses and defeat for the Luftwaffe. Now Hitler turned his full attention to the east and an attack on the Soviet Union was in the works.

The Blitzkrieg that had left other parts of Europe in ruins was also devastating to Russia. A war of annihilation between the Soviets and the Germans carried on for the remainder of the war. Neither side showed any mercy. Millions of troops were drafted to protect cities such as Kiev, Moscow, and Stalingrad, but resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands. The brutality of the war between these two powers motivated some Soviet troops to try and flee, however Stalin ordered the placement of special "blocking detachments" who were instructed to shoot any deserters (Rees, 2011). Soviet partisans were also told to shoot anyone who seemed disloyal. The Soviets were worn out, starving, and desperate. The tide changed during the Battle of Stalingrad in the spring of 1942 when the Soviets changed their technique to one of fighting while retreating. As the Soviets pulled back, they avoided getting captured by the Germans, stretching out the German supply line in the process. By 1944, a Soviet invasion of Germany seemed very likely to happen as the Soviets pursued the retreating German army (Rees, 2011). For four years, 400 German and Soviet divisions fought on the Eastern Front. The Soviets gave Hitler his largest setback in the summer of 1944. An offensive in Belorussia and eastern Poland resulted in the defeat of three times more German army divisions than in Normandy (Krylov, 2014).

Between these years, ethnic minorities were also suffering at the hands of both the Nazis and Soviets. Hitler and the Nazis had begun the transportation of Jews and other minorities to labor and extermination camps. Stalin, meanwhile, was cracking down on all ethnic collaborators and would punish entire ethnic nations by sending them to Siberia as punishment. Families were crammed into transport trains. Due to the unsanitary conditions, many did not survive journey. The figures of those that perished are believed to be greatly underestimated (Rees, 2011). As the Soviets pushed into Berlin, Hitler instructed all German citizens to do everything in their power to ensure the Soviets wouldn't capture the city. Soviet troops were responsible for the rape and murder of German citizens while they were in Berlin. The final victory for the Soviets came when a red flag was raised over the Berlin Reichstag in April 1945.

U.S. ENTERS THE WAR

When the war broke out in Europe, President Roosevelt knew that the conflict had the potential of becoming a major threat to the U.S., more so while Japan continued to expand. In accordance with the Fourth Neutrality Act of 1939, U.S. was allowed to trade weapons with nations, provided that these countries paid in cash and collected them. Two years later, the Lend-Lease Act was implemented, allowing the lending or selling of ammunition, weapons, and food to any country fighting for democracy



or the destruction of fascism. Over the course of a few months, the U.S. began to escort British ships and convoys carrying the war materials being leased, which alarmed many isolationists who believed that Roosevelt was provoking skirmishes with Germans (History.com Staff).

The impact of World War II on the United States was so profound that almost no aspect in citizens' daily lives went unchanged. Even though there were no battles on the mainland, the public relations movement in the U.S. helped change the way people lived in order to make the home front efforts exceptional. Vast efforts were made to strategize with the other members of the Grand Alliance to develop plans to battle and defeat the Axis powers. The U.S. was less directly affected than other nations, but the country still experienced fundamental changes as a result of its role in the war (Hixson, 2003).

President Roosevelt was determined to mobilize the country and transform it into the "arsenal of democracy." Eventually every decision people made, from what to buy and eat to how citizens spent their free time, had consequences of a global scale. For example, taking extra breaks, sick days, and even broken tools were seen as moments that could give the enemy an advantage. One of the benefits of the war was that it propelled the U.S. out of the depression and made it into a boom economy. By the end of the war, Americans and about 5% of the world's population were producing half of the world's manufactured goods (Smithsonian Education, 2007). However, the road to these final stages of the war effort was bumpy. It took time for people to become accustomed to their new lifestyle that was mostly dictated by the government and military. Rationing became crucial to the war effort. Materials such as metal were recycled to make military materiel. In just a short time the U.S. produced 80,000 landing craft, 100,000 tanks and armored cars, 15 million guns, and over 40 billion rounds of ammunition (Smithsonian Education, 2007).

Various wartime government agencies were developed to help with the war effort and production as well. One agency after another sprung up during the early year of the war. These agencies allowed Roosevelt to have assistants that would play off against each other, allowing him to make the final choices for himself. Some of the new agencies included the National Defense Advisory Commission, Office of Production Management, War Production Board, and eventually the Office of War Mobilization which was in charge of organizing the different parts of the economy.

Getting the public to support these new initiatives would not be an easy task. Propaganda would be a key factor during this period, so the U.S. launched a massive advertising and PR campaign to encourage responsibility and voluntary action. The government wanted the public to understand what it meant to be "citizen soldiers." Posters reminded Americans of the importance of conservation and self-reliance. Victory gardens were planted, and ration cards were issued to limit the purchase of groceries and gasoline (Smithsonian Education, 2007). To make such posters readily available, the government and other private or public agencies and organizations began to use a silk-screening process that reproduced a mass amount of color posters. Posters were supposed to capture the object of the war effort by also conveying democratic principles so that people would feel like it was their responsibility to take action and give the country that final necessary push toward victory. The government also advised private



organizations and agencies to develop posters promoting the war objectives. The protection of the “Four Freedoms” (freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, and freedom from want and fear) depended on the results of the war. If Germany and the other Axis powers won, that would mean the world would no longer be secure for democracy. Posters such as Uncle Sam’s “I Want You” and Rosie the Riveter helped mobilize the nation, making the war a personal matter.

After Roosevelt initially called off all aid toward the countries who were belligerents to the war, he claimed that if Great Britain went down, the rest of the world “would be living at the point of a gun”. It was the responsibility of the U.S. to become the “great arsenal of democracy.” To reduce the panic among isolationists and other Americans, he stated that Great Britain and the other Allied powers were not asking the U.S. to actually fight in the war; they simply wanted the necessary weapons and materials to continue fighting and defeat the Axis powers. Proposing that America should become an arsenal, an armory for the rest of the world, and not a combatant led to the creation of the Lend-Lease Act, which would supply Great Britain without reference to money (Kennedy, *The American People in World War II: Freedom From Fear Part II*, 1999).

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the next step for war planners was to determine what strategy to take. Many planners and the public pushed for a plan that focused on an assault against Japan first in order to “make Japan pay” by destroying the empire (Hixson, 2003). After some discussions with the Soviet Union and Great Britain in a series of conferences, the final decision would center around a “Germany first” plan. Great Britain initially wanted to open a front on the Mediterranean, but the U.S. thought that strategy was indecisive and risked to make the war longer than what anyone wanted. The Soviet Union promised to continue fighting if a cross-channel invasion plan was adopted.

Life on the home front changed dramatically for minorities and women. The War Powers Act granted Roosevelt the authority to do what was necessary to drive the war effort. One of the first steps the U.S. had to take was to expand the military. By doing so, women’s auxiliary forces were created in the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard. The civil rights movement was also becoming more active, and the African American community experienced a small victory when President Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which outlawed discrimination in war industries (PBS). The military remained segregated until 1948; however the war years laid the foundation for integration. While most African Americans were given non-combat roles, their work was as equally important. During the final moments of the war, the casualty rate forced the military to have more African American soldiers in infantry, as medics or pilots, tankers, and even officers. By 1945, more than 1.2 million African Americans would be actively involved on the home front, Europe and the Pacific (The National WWII Museum).

Latino Americans also played a big role in World War II, not only in Europe and the Pacific but in the Mediterranean, the Aleutians, and North Africa as well. Over 500,000 Latinos served in the war. Like other minorities, Latino Americans faced segregation and were the primary victims of the “zoot-suit riots” in Los Angeles in 1943. After the war, many gained a sense of confidence and began to hope that life would be different, that finally they would be treated as equals. Because of this pride and drive to change the perception and treatment of Latinos, a civil rights movement emerged which was headed by



veterans (PBS). Japanese Americans had to find ways to prove that they weren't "traitors" or "disloyal" like the media, political leaders, and others were portraying them as. The lives of Japanese Americans changed dramatically when Order 9066 was passed. Their rights were taken away, and everything they owned whether it was a business or home was also given up.

"ENEMY ALIEN" INTERNMENT

On February 19, 1942 – two months after Pearl Harbor – President Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 which ordered for the relocation of all people of Japanese ancestry to internment camps (or concentration camps) in different parts of the U.S. Racism toward Asians increased in the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor. The objectives of Order 9066 were to prevent enemy "alien" espionage and protect the people of Japanese descent. After the war was over, an internee questioned why there were "guns at the guard towers pointed inward instead of outward" if the people imprisoned were being protected (The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration).

Japanese Americans were thought of being untrustworthy because many believed they were loyal to the ancestral land without any legitimate proof or concrete evidence. The most common stereotypes applied to the Japanese during the war were that of animals. The humiliation brought on them did not stop with the images seen on propaganda posters. The idea that they were indeed animals in the eyes of white Americans was reinforced with the facilities they were forced to stay in before being relocated to the camps. People were crowded into dirty buildings or stalls in racetracks such as Santa Anita (Dower, 1986).

About fifteen thousand Japanese Americans left the Pacific coast in February and early March of 1942 and moved in with their families that resided in the Midwest or east. Representatives of these regions spoke out against the migration and claimed that the Japanese Americans would only bring about more trouble (Kennedy, 1999). Racist voices were heard throughout the country, asking for all Japanese Americans and other enemies of the state to be under heavy guard. Lieutenant General John L. DeWitt issued a "freeze order", forcing the remaining Japanese Americans to stay in the Pacific Coast. They weren't allowed to leave the zone without permission. DeWitt himself became one of those voices expressing. He told newspapers Japanese were untrustworthy and disloyal. He retracted from his belief that an American citizen is an American citizen and now advocated that a "Jap's a Jap...It makes no difference whether he is an American citizen or not." (Kennedy, 1999)

The camp at Manzanar received its first prisoners in June 1942. As evacuees entered the camp, they were met with barbed-wire fencing, guard towers, searchlights, and machine gun installations. Approximately 120,000 Issei and Nisei were imprisoned in War Relocation Authority camps throughout the United States. German and Italian citizens were also imprisoned under separate confinement programs. They had been classified as "enemy aliens" and were arrested by the Department of Justice. More German prisoners from Latin America were also sent to these camps by the Department of State's Special War Problems Division. The Department of Justice assigned the Alien Enemy Control unit to handle the cases of the people were being detained. In Texas, there were boards in Houston, Dallas, El Paso, and San Antonio (Texas Historical Commission). People who refused to wear loyalty to the United



States or resisted internment were deported to “segregation centers.” After that, they would be brought before a board where internees who were prosecuted would be released, paroled, or interned for the duration of the war.

In Texas, there were 3 temporary detention facilities in Houston, San Antonio and Laredo. The 3 Department of Justice camps were located in Crystal City, Kenedy, and Seagoville. There were also two U.S. Army “temporary detention camps” in Fort Sam Houston at Dodd Field and Fort Bliss in El Paso (Texas Historical Commission). The Crystal City Family Internment Camp was originally built to hold Japanese Americans, but by December 12, 1942 the first group of internees to arrive was a mix of German Americans and German Enemy Aliens. The following year the first group of Latin Americans from Costa Rica – also German – arrived. On March 17th, the first group of Japanese Americans arrived at the camp. Italian Americans were also classified as enemy aliens and interned; however after Italy surrendered, almost all of the internees were released by the end of 1943 or paroled (Texas Historical Commission). From 1942 to June of 1945, Crystal City interned 4,751 people.

Japanese Americans also attempted to fight back against the internment orders, one such case being *Korematsu v. United States*. In September Fred Korematsu was convicted in federal court after having been caught for falsifying his identity. Still, he refused to give up and appealed his case to the Supreme Court in 1944. On a 6 to 3 majority, the Supreme Court held that the incarceration was not influenced or motivated by racism. It was justifiable for one major reason: according to the Army, they were taking measures to protect the country and claimed that Japanese Americans were radio-signaling enemy ships from the shore. The Supreme Court accepted the U.S. military’s claims that Japanese Americans were prone to disloyalty, and that it was necessary to apply the internment policy to all Japanese Americans (Konkoly, 2006). It was impossible to distinguish the loyal and disloyal, said the Supreme Court. Despite the Supreme Court’s decision in Korematsu’s case, the truth remained that his case was the biggest threat to the constitutionality of the relocation program (Kennedy).

THE MANHATTAN PROJECT: RACE FOR THE ATOMIC BOMB

On December 6, 1941 the U.S. initiated a nuclear war program known as the Manhattan Project. Years prior, physicists and other scientists had been almost consumed by the idea of using the atom’s “awesome power” for military purposes (Kennedy). According to British physicist Frederick Soddy, whoever developed such a weapon would have the power to destroy the earth if they chose to do so (Kennedy). Few scientists knew what it would take to build such a destructive bomb. Japan and Germany had begun their research before the U.S. funded the Manhattan Project. In fact, it was the fear of Germany creating a nuclear bomb first that drove the U.S. to start their nuclear research program.

In the midst of Hitler’s tyranny and after *Kristallnacht*, nearly one hundred Jewish scientists fled from persecution and violence and came to the United States over the course of a decade. In 1942, Germany abandoned its nuclear research even though two German scientists had successfully split uranium into two elements that released an impressive amount of electron volts of energy; they had created fission. Hitler, however, dismissed their success and physics in general as a “Jewish science”



WAR IN THE PACIFIC

In the midst of the vast changes occurring on the home front, the United States was also making preparations to go to war. Men and women joined the armed forces and were preparing to be shipped off to Europe or the Pacific. Meanwhile, Yamamoto was set on finishing the job that was started at Pearl Harbor. The only way to do this was to seize Midway Island, which was located about 1100 miles from Hawaii. The location was ideal for two main reasons: first, if Japan seized Midway they would be able to threaten Hawaii with an invasion and force the U.S. into a settlement. The second reason, for military purposes, was that it would lure the U.S. Pacific Fleet for the long-awaited “decisive battle”. The doctrine of “decisive battle” was based on the Japanese plan to wage war against the U.S. that was influenced by naval strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan (Kennedy). At first, the U.S. had a similar plan codenamed Orange Plan which was also influenced by Mahan. It predicted the invasion of the Philippines, thus making its relief the main objective for the U.S. The plan was revised in 1934, and eventually the U.S. war strategy became that of “island hopping.”

In retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbor, Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle organized a raid consisting of 16 B-25 bombers that flew over Tokyo and other Japanese cities and bombed them. The planes would crash land in China after reaching the limit of their flying range. However, none of the planes actually reached the airfields in China. Even though the air raid did not do much material damage, it did succeed in affecting Japanese morale because it displayed the Americans’ ability to carry out an invasion on the mainland. In order to do this, Japan set its eyes on Midway Island.

Before the decisive battle of Midway, a complex skirmish that lasted from May 3 to May 8, 1942 put Japan and the U.S. in the naval history books. During the Battle of the Coral Sea, Japan and the U.S. fought only with carrier-based aircraft. After attempting to take Port Moresby, the Americans were able to drive the Japanese back to Rabaul, giving the Allies a strategic victory. However, Japan still had to opportunity to recuperate since they still had the advantage during this time. The turning point of the War in the Pacific came during the Battle of Midway in June 1942.

While the Japanese were mobilizing for their next big move, the U.S. was working hard to crack Japanese codes with Magic – a cryptanalyst project. In the spring of 1942, Station Hypo, Combat Intelligence Office commanded by Commander Joseph Rochefort, guessed the location of the next Japanese attack (Kennedy, 1999). Rochefort guessed that a term that appeared frequently – “AF” – stood for Midway and designed a trap. A small marine and army air force garrison radioed that the distillation plant in Midway had stopped worked, and that they were running short on fresh water. Two days later, Station Hypo received a Japanese coded message that confirmed “AF”, or Midway, was low on water (Kennedy, 1999). The Battle of Midway ensued in June. Japan sought to defeat the American Pacific Fleet and use Midway as a base of attack. Over two days, the U.S. and Japan fought on Midway until the Japanese were forced to retreat. Japan was prevented from expanding even more across the Pacific and allowed the U.S. to establish a series of island-hopping campaigns – among them the infamous battles of Guadalcanal, Pelelieu, and Iwo Jima – to invade the Pacific islands.



Almost every island in the Pacific had been invaded by Japan and brought into its sphere of influence. The Philippines were invaded on December 8th. The capital, Manila, was captured in a month. Americans and Filipinos alike were forced to retreat back to the Bataan Peninsula, where the makeshift army would hold out for a few months without any kind of support (History.com Staff, 2009). On April 9, 1942 the troops surrendered at Bataan after having suffered from starvation and disease for so long. The men were rounded up and forced to march about 80 miles to prisoner-of-war-camps close to the base of the Bataan Peninsula (Kennedy, 1999). When the Japanese came across the prisoners, they were only prepared to take in about 40,000 men; but now they had nearly 70,000 of them. The Japanese soldiers had also been trying to deal with starvation and disease. The tensions between both groups only heightened and contributed to a clash of cultures (Kennedy, 1999). Japanese guards and Korean troops used for guard duty restricted how much water the prisoners could have, starved the prisoners, and beat or bayoneted them if they fell behind (Kennedy, 1999). It is estimated that thousands of troops died on these death marches and in the camps themselves due to the brutality inflicted by the captors. What occurred in the Bataan Peninsula was a glimpse of the inhumanity both sides – the U.S. and Japan – would employ throughout the War in the Pacific. In late 1944, the Philippines were liberated, allowing the Americans to begin massive air attack on Japan. British forces recaptured Burma, and the islands once conquered by the Japanese all began to fall into the hands of the Allied powers.

Other significant events of the Pacific War after the Battle of Midway were Guadalcanal, Saipan, Pelelieu, Leyte Gulf, Philippines Campaign, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa. The strategy adopted by the U.S. to take these islands was known as “island-hopping” or “leapfrogging”. This plan was designed to target Japanese garrisons while avoiding heavily guarded strongholds. By isolating the bases, the Japanese supply line would be weakened, and the ability to send for reinforcements would be greatly reduced. The main goal was to have Japan “wither on the vine” (Kennedy, 1999) and allow U.S. forces to reach Japan more quickly without having to capture every Japanese-held island.

Massive air attacks such as incendiary bombings all over Japan were executed later that same year. The tight hold Japan had on Asia and the Pacific was loosening, however the fighting in the islands continued to produce some of the bloodiest battles that occurred during the war. U.S. forces suffered heavy losses in the battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. It was clear who the victors would be in the Pacific War; however Japan would not give up. In order to end the war, the U.S. Air Force dropped atomic bombs in the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The initial explosion claimed the lives of tens of thousands of civilians. The total amount of deaths as a result of the blasts was approximately 120,000 while many more suffered the effects of radiation (USHMM). Two days later, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan and invaded Manchuria.

THE TIDE CHANGES

Now that the United States were officially in the war, the nations’ leaders gathered in a series of conferences to decide on a strategy that would bring about the surrender of Germany. The U.S. adopted a “Europe” first policy and mainly focused on the Western Front despite being involved in the Pacific Theatre as well. Toward the end of 1943, Hitler issued a proclamation in which he warned about an



offensive in the Western Front. In order to prepare, Hitler assigned Field Marshal Erwin Rommel to fortify a perimeter along the French coast (Kennedy, *The American People in World War II*, 1999). This “Atlantic Wall” had been under construction since the late summer of 1942 and was designed to repel an Allied attack. Rommel’s task was to riddle all possible beaches where the enemy could land with minefields and obstacles, all of which would be covered by machine-gun and mortar units (Anderson, 2011).

The Normandy Invasion

In November 28, 1943, three of the world’s top leaders – Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt – gathered in Iran at the Tehran Conference to discuss strategies for winning the war. Stalin, it could be argued, was the driving force behind the conference because he insisted that a second front be open in northern France by reminding Churchill and Stalin the fighting the Russians were involved in. If the operation was successful, Germany would be trapped between the American and British in the west and the Soviets in the east.

There were two possible locations for the invasion; the first was Pas de Calais. Its location was ideal because it was close to the German industries of the Ruhr. The other location was Normandy, which had the biggest advantage of the two: its large beaches were perfect for the mass number of troops that would be deployed. After Roosevelt gave in to Stalin’s persistence, the target date for the invasion was set to May 1, 1944 (Kennedy, 1999). The following day, the leaders approved the plan for Operation Overlord, which would be a massive attack across the channel supported by landing in the south of France partnered with a Russian offensive movement in the east. The only way Overlord would work, Stalin argued, was if the invasion was launched from northern France. Normandy was selected as the location due to its vast beaches that would allow a mass number of troops to come in, and because it provided the best access to France’s interior. A commander to the operation was appointed: Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force.

On June 6, 1944, after four years of battling the Axis Powers, the Allies executed a well-planned effort that involved months of secret preparations. Thousands of Americans, Canadian, and British troops landed on the beaches of Normandy, France and launched a successful offensive into Nazi-occupied Western Europe. The assault phase of Overlord was code-named Neptune and sought to secure a foothold in Normandy. The Allied forces began their attack by bombing railroads, bridges, airfields, and other vital locations. Although the Germans knew an attack was imminent, they did not know where the Allied forces would strike. The Allied landings were made up of 5 major areas of beach operations: Juno, Sword, Gold, Utah, and Omaha. The Canadians and British took Juno, Gold, and Sword while the Americans targeted Omaha and Utah (Kennedy, *The American People in World War II*, 1999).

In addition, there were three airborne drop zones. The 82nd and 101st Airborne Divisions were to secure the area west of Utah. The 6th British Airborne Division would secure bridges over the Orne River from the eastern side of the invasion (Williams, 2000). The paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines to delay German counterattacks and cause confusion. By doing so, they were paving the way for the amphibious landings (National World War II Museum). The paratroopers were scattered and missing



equipment, so they did not succeed in accomplishing all missions, but they did their job in holding off the Germans long enough to help make the invasion a success.

The Normandy Invasion is considered to be the beginning of the end of the war in Europe. There were many obstacles to overcome, among them the “Atlantic Wall” built by the Germans in the early 1940s and strategic planning was critical. The troops needed the light of a full moon and wanted to land on the shores of Normandy during high tide to avoid the obstacles planted by the Germans. The weather was something no one could control and was almost the cause of the cancellation of D-Day. The Germans had even believed that the invasion would be cancelled due to how bad the weather got. However, the operation commenced on June 6th with 6,000 ships carrying troops, weapons, tanks, and equipment charged into the beaches. By the end of the day over 150,000 troops had landed. Fighting was fierce and many Allied soldiers lost their lives, but the operation was successful. A decisive Allied victory, it prevented Nazi Germany from sending troops to build up the Eastern Front in order to stop the Soviet Union’s advance. By the end of August, Paris had been liberated, and the Nazis were pushed out of northwestern France. This renowned day in history became known as “D-Day” as the Allies began a march from the west that would ultimately end in the defeat of Germany.

WAR IN EUROPE

By August 25th, the Americans and British were able to break through the lines and liberate Paris after four years of Nazi occupation. Come September 1944, the Allies were confident that the war had turned in their favor and were convinced that the Germans were on the brink of defeat (Pegasus Archive, 2000). The German military had been almost completely driven out of France and Belgium, and the front line had moved a few miles from the Dutch border. Operation Market Garden, which occurred on September 17, 1944, sought to drop airborne troopers behind enemy lines and assign each unit to capture eight bridges over the rivers on the Dutch and German border. If the plan was success, the war could be over by Christmas.

The plan was conceived by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. About 35,000 British and American paratroopers would be dropped behind enemy lines. If the paratroopers were able to take all of the bridges, there would be no obstacle between the British and Germany. The planned assault was compelling and overwhelming, but it resulted in failure (Pegasus Archive, 2000). There weren’t enough supplies to distribute for there was only one supply point. The process became excruciatingly slow, and a lack of transport planes also affected the outcome of the operation (Fielder, 2011). After ten days of fighting, the operation ended with the evacuation of the 1st British Airborne Division from Arnhem.

By December, France and parts of Belgium were also liberated. In an attempt to keep their hold on Belgium and northern France, the Germans launched a counterattack on December 16, 1944, the Battle of the Bulge – also known as the Ardennes Counteroffensive. Hitler dispersed 250,000 troops to the Allied Front and surrounded the areas from Belgium to Luxembourg (PBS). The Germans advanced 50 miles in the Allied lines, creating a “bulge” that penetrated the Allied defenses. The counteroffensive seemed to be working for the Germans and for a moment it seemed that they might win the battle. However, the advance was short-lived. On December 26th, U.S. armored troops fought German forces



that were defending a vital junction in Bastogne. The defenses put up by the Americans as they fought in small groups in sub-zero weather conditions was one of the reasons why the German advance was stopped (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

After gaining access into Bastogne, U.S. and some British troops launched their own counterattack and pushed the German troops back, eliminating the “bulge” in the process. Starting on January 8, 1945, the Germans began to pull back as the Americans continued to advance, eventually removing the Germans’ gains by the end of the month (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The Battle of the Bulge was a decisive victory for the Allies that brought them closer to Germany’s borders, and also crippled their military’s strength since they lost valuable reserves and equipment during the battle. Thus, British and US troops pushed the Germans back into Germany and plans of occupying Germany were underway.

On February 4, 1945, the “Big Three” met for one last time in Yalta. Roosevelt and Churchill agreed to let Stalin take over the governments of Eastern Europe – a decision that would contribute to the beginning of the Cold War a few short years after the Second World War was over (PBS). By March, U.S. forces crossed the Rhine River, forcing the German to retreat into Germany. Meanwhile, the Soviets continued to work their way into Germany and were in Berlin by April 30 – the same day that Hitler committed suicide. Even though *der Führer* was dead, the war pressed on. The war in Europe came to an end on May 7, 1945 when Eisenhower accepted Germany’s unconditional surrender at Reims, France.

Liberation

Nazi Germany faced near military defeat beginning January 1945 after their counteroffensive in the Ardennes forest failed. The Germans were running low on supplies, particularly fuel which they needed to maintain the armored assault (History Learning Site, 2011). As the Allies delved deeper into the German mainland, they approached thousands of camps and prisoners unlike anything they had ever seen. Many had survived unspeakable conditions of torture and hate crimes. They were suffering from starvation and disease and many were in dire need of medical attention.

DEATH MARCHES

The SS organized death marches and gathered up the remaining prisoners in the camps. During these death marches, prisoners were forced to walk hundreds of miles under grueling conditions with little to no food, water, and rest. Those that fell behind were usually shot. Initially, the evacuations from the camps were conducted by train or even ships, but the Allies eventually gained control of the skies and sea, making it nearly impossible for the Germans to continue moving camp prisoners through these two means. Death marches had three major purposes: SS authorities did not want the people in the camps to tell the liberators what happened or their stories; Nazis wanted to keep prisoners for war production purposes; and finally, some SS leaders, thought that Jewish concentration camp prisoners could be used as hostages to negotiate a peace that would allow the Nazi regime to prosper once the war ended (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Marches occurred up to the final days of the war. It is also believed that the term “death marches” was coined by the camp prisoners themselves. On May 1, 1945 – just six days before the Germans had



surrendered in the west – prisoners from Neuengamme boarded ships in the North Sea coastline. Hundreds of people died due to bombings; the British thought the ships were carrying German military personnel (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The largest death marches occurred from the winter of 1944 up until 1945 when the Soviet Army liberated Poland (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2007).

The Allied forces discovered evidence of mass murder, which the Germans had attempted to hide, demolish, or burn. The gas chambers were still standing, and piles of corpses lay unburied. They found personal belongings of the victims along with thousands of men’s suits and more than 800,000 women’s outfits. The Allied forces also found 14,000 pounds of human hair (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The horrors uncovered at these camps, whether they were labor, transit, or extermination camps, exposed the full scope of Nazi atrocities to the world. Those that survived would provide the sole testimonials that have allowed many to study the events of the Holocaust and who the people targeted by the Nazis were.

LIBERATION OF CAMPS

Liberators were unprepared for the level of tragedy as they entered concentration camps, and were profoundly and painfully impacted by what they saw. The liberation of concentration and extermination camps began in Eastern Europe when the Soviet army came across Majdanek on July 1944 in Lublin, Poland. The following year on January 25th, the Soviets liberated Auschwitz. The major camps liberated by American forces were Buchenwald, Dara-Mittelbau, Flossenbuerg, Dachau, and Mauthausen, along with hundreds of sub-camps.

After the British liberated Bergen-Belsen on April 15, 1945, which was a camp that consisted of three main components: POW camp, “residence camp”, and the “prisoners’ camp” that included two women’s camps. The camp would hold Jews, POWs, political prisoners, Roma, “asocials”, and other victims throughout its existence. Bergen-Belsen was also used to hold prisoners from other camps and those that had survived the death marches. British liberators found about 60,000 prisoners most whom were extremely ill (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Texas liberators Valls and Waters were among the American soldiers who witnessed the horrors that had occurred at Bergen-Belsen.

At the beginning of April 1945, U.S. forces approached Buchenwald, prompting the Nazis to evacuate around 28,000 of the camp’s prisoners from the main camp. Buchenwald, along with its subcamps, was one of the largest concentration camps built. It became an important source of forced labor and reached a population of 112,000 by February 1945. On April 11th, U.S. forces entered the camp. Soldiers of the 6th Armored Division found more than 21,000 survivors (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The liberators associated with the liberation of Buchenwald are Canafax, Harman, and Watson. That same month, the Seventh Army’s 45th Infantry Division liberated Dachau. Initially, the prisoners at Dachau were used for forced labor, and the camp was also used as a training camp for SS camp guards. When the Americans came across the camp, they found more than 30 railcars filled with bodies and even more were found once they entered the camp. About 30,000 people had survived



(History.com Staff). Anderson, Buchanan, Havey, Josephs, Miller, and Morgan were among the liberators of Dachau.

Another Texas liberator, Womack, was involved with the liberation of Landsberg – one of eleven camps that were a part of the Kaufering complex. The camps were built to help produce the German jet fighter Messerschmitt Me 262. Between June 1944 to its liberation in April of 1945, 14,500 Jewish prisoners were murdered (Landsberg im 20. Jahrhundert). For many of these liberators, what they witnessed in these camps was worse than what they had seen on the battlefield. That was the case for Rohn and Dippo when they liberated Mauthausen. More than 190,000 prisoners passed through the camps system between August 1938 and May 1945. Of the approximate 95,000 that perished in the camp, more than 14,000 were Jewish (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum).

Similar to other camps that held prisoners who were too weak, Nordhausen designed as an extermination camp for the weak and ill. The prisoners were still required to commit to forced labor; however the main difference was that SS did not use gas chambers to murder the prisoners. Instead, guards used starvation methods and would completely ignore the prisoners' medical needs (Jewish Gen, 2001). On April 1, 1945 the camp was evacuated and most of the prisoners were transferred to Bergen-Belsen. Danner, Liberman, Reynolds, and Stem were among the American liberators who witnessed what was left of the camp including a handful of prisoners who had not been transferred (Holocaust Education & Archive Research Team, 2008).

Other American units recognized as liberators are the 12th, 14th, and 20th Armored Divisions. All three divisions played a role in the fight for liberating France. The 12th was involved in liberating one of the subcamps of Dachau in Landsberg (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The 4th Infantry Division, who had fought with distinction since World War I and was involved in D-Day and in liberating France, liberated a subcamp of Dachau as they marched into Germany (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). The 101st Airborne Division liberated another Dachau subcamp, and the 82nd Airborne liberated a subcamp of Neuengamme, respectively. When the 101st reached the camp, SS officials and guards had evacuated many of the camp's prisoners and organized a death march. Hundreds of prisoners were too ill and weak to make the march, so to prevent the prisoners from revealing information to US troops, the SS set fire to the barracks.

One of the most distinguished units of World War II was the 442nd Regimental Combat Team. All of the enlisted men were Japanese Americans from the west coast and Hawaii. Another Nisei infantry unit that saw heavy fighting during the war was the 100th Infantry Battalion, which was combined with the 442nd and were given the new unit name: 100th/442nd Regimental Combat Team. The 100/442nd led assaults on two beachheads in Italy and France and was responsible for discovering Dachau (Shenkle, 2006). The 522nd Field Artillery Battalion was attached to the 442nd, but starting spring 1945, the battalion became independent during the southern German campaign. Units of the 522nd liberated prisoners from one of the death marches near Dachau and its sub-camps. As they moved further south in Munich, they encountered these sub-camps (about 8 or 9), and in them thousands of starving and dying inmates by the road (Miho, 2006). One can only imagine what the team's experience was upon liberating Dachau



and its subcamp since the men's families were also being detained back in the U.S (Shenkle, 2006). Like other liberators, these units did what was possible to help the survivors and gave them the necessary care.

Liberation was not one of the main objectives of the Allied military campaign. In fact, stories that had circulated early in the war about the camps around the time Majdanek was liberated were dismissed as propaganda. However, once soldiers saw the conditions Jews and other victims of the Nazis were living in, their perspectives changed. Liberators freed the survivors and provided food and aid while they collected evidence to prosecute Nazi officials for war crimes (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Thousands, unfortunately, continued to die even after liberation at a high rate. There was still a lack of sanitary conditions, which deeply affected the survivors who had contracted diseases while they had been incarcerated in the camps. The wartime refugees, known as displaced persons (DPs), were finally allowed to return home.

DISPLACED PERSONS

In the summer of 1945, President Truman sent Earl G. Harrison to investigate the conditions of the Jewish DPs in the American zone of Germany. Harrison reported back that the camps were still in terrible condition, and suggested that Jewish DPs should be allowed to immigrate to Palestine (Yad Vashem). Six million returned to their native countries, but over a million DPs also refused to go back home, particularly Jews. They refused to go back to the countries that had shunned them and driven them away. For many, they had no choice but to go somewhere else due to underground anti-Semitic and Nazi-sympathizing groups that were determined to "finish what the Nazis started." To deal with the large number of DPs, camps were created and run by the U.S., Great Britain, and France. In the fall of 1945, Jewish displaced persons were recognized as a special group and were given authority to take charge of their own affairs. Committees were elected and were in charge of the running the camp as well as improving the living conditions of the camps (London Jewish Cultural Centre, 2011). Survivors also began searching for their relatives while in the DP camps. The Central Tracing Bureau was created to help survivors locate their families. Lists were also released in public radio broadcast and newspapers that contained names and the whereabouts of survivors. Reuniting and rebuilding was a priority for many of the DPs (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). In 1953, the last DP camp in Germany was closed.

General Dwight D. Eisenhower had received reports of the treatment Jews, Roma and Sinti, prisoners, and other groups of people were receiving at the hands of the Nazis before the invasion to liberate Europe was initiated. Information about the concentration camp system had also circulated among the Allied commanders (War History Online, 2012). The first camp to be liberated by the Americans was Ohrdruf on April 4, 1945. The liberators later found out that Ohrdruf was one of many subcamps that served Buchenwald. Just before the camp was discovered by the Western allies, SS guards had marched all of the able-bodied prisoners to Buchenwald and left the dying, diseased, and wounded in Ohrdruf. There were piles of bodies in a large pit and in a shed where the bodies had been stacked (Georgia Tech Library and Information Center). The SS guards had attempted to burn the corpses as well before they



had left. On April 12th, Eisenhower visited the camp along with Patton and Bradley, who were appalled at the sight of the camp and its prisoners, whether dead or those who had barely survived. Eisenhower also organized a visit to Buchenwald, which had been captured soon after Ohrdruf. After having witnessed the atrocities in both camps, he ordered that every American soldier who was not on the frontlines to visit the camps and see for themselves who they were fighting against and why.

What Eisenhower and the liberating soldiers witnessed at Buchenwald, Ohrdruf, Dachau, and other camps was difficult to comprehend. To ensure that no one would ever forget what happened at the labor, concentration, and extermination camps, Eisenhower ordered that every citizen of Gotha had to tour the camp. In addition, all news media and military camera units were also required to visit the camps and document the horrors, preserving the horrors that occurred in these camps on photographs and film. By doing so, Eisenhower believed that people would get a first-hand experience at what the Holocaust was and what the perpetrators were capable of. "The visual evidence and the verbal testimony of starvation, cruelty and bestiality," Eisenhower confessed, "were so overpowering as to leave me a bit sick. In one room, where they were piled up twenty or thirty naked men, killed by starvation, George Patton would not even enter. He said that he would get sick if he did so." (Georgia Tech Library and Information Center). This would provide the "first-hand evidence of these things if ever, in the future, there develops a tendency to charge these allegations merely to 'propaganda.'" (War History Online, 2012).

CONCLUSION

World War II has been called the most destructive and widespread war in history. There were over 60 million lives lost during the war, which lasted about six years in Europe and longer in Asia. The war also allowed for the Nazis to carry out the "Final Solution" on Jews and other victims from the Nazi-occupied nations. There were approximately 11 million lost lives during the Holocaust. Six million were of Jewish descent and 5 million were Roma and other "undesirables."

Though World War II resulted in a monumental loss of life, it also renewed the spirit of Americans, created new jobs (as production of needed war materials flourished), and ended the tyranny of The Third Reich. After World War II, the U.S. and the Soviet Union became the leading national powers and the United Nations was formed to provide aid and support to countries around the world.



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