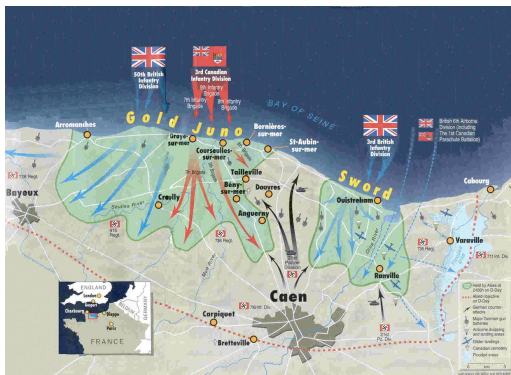


World War II Ends



D-Day Gives the Allies a Foothold in Europe



On June 6, 1944, Allied forces under U.S. general Dwight D. Eisenhower landed on the Normandy beaches in history's greatest naval invasion: D-Day.

Within three months, the Allies had landed 2 million men and 500,000 vehicles in northern France.

Allied forces then began pushing inland and broke through German defensive lines.

Allied troops liberated Paris by the end of August 1944.



The Battle of the Bulge



In December the Germans launched a counteroffensive to regain the seaport of Antwerp in Belgium. The Battle of the Bulge was named for the “bulge” the German attack caused in Allied lines.

By January 1945, both sides had suffered heavy losses, but the Allied lines held.

In March 1945, the Allied forces crossed the Rhine River and advanced into Germany.

At the end of April 1945, Allied armies in northern Germany moved toward the Elbe River, where they linked up with the Soviets.



The Soviets Advance

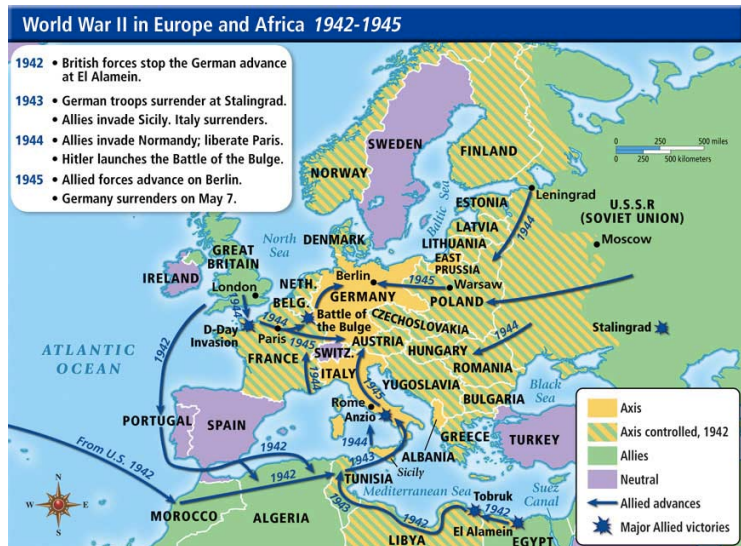
The Soviets had soundly defeated the German forces at the Battle of Kursk in July of 1943, the greatest tank battle of World War II.

Soviet forces now began a steady advance westward.

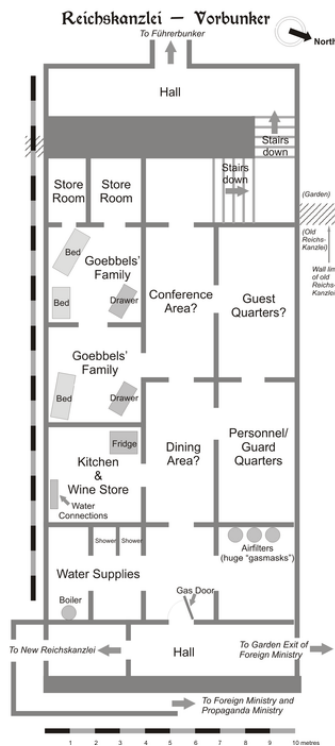
Reoccupying the Ukraine by the end of 1943, they moved into the Baltic states by early 1944.



Advancing along a northern front, Soviet troops occupied Warsaw in January 1945 and entered Berlin in April. Meanwhile, Soviet troops along a southern front swept through Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria.



Hitler's Demise



By January 1945, Adolf Hitler had moved into a bunker 55 feet under the city of Berlin. In his final political testament, Hitler, consistent to the end in his anti-Semitism, blamed the Jews for the war. He wrote:

Above all I charge the leaders of the nation and those under them to scrupulous observance of the laws of race and to merciless opposition to the universal poisoner of all peoples, international Jewry.
from Hitler's Final Will and Testament, April 29, 1945

Hitler committed suicide on April 30, two days after Italian partisans, or resistance fighters, shot Mussolini.

On May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered.
The war in Europe was finally over.

Germany is Defeated

Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill had met at Tehran in November 1943 to discuss the final assault on Germany—an American-British invasion through France scheduled for the spring of 1944 (D-Day).



Soviet and British-American forces would meet in defeated Germany along a dividing line.

Most likely, Soviet forces would liberate Eastern Europe.

The Allies also agreed to a partition of postwar Germany.

The Western powers faced the reality of 11 million Soviet soldiers taking possession of Eastern Europe and much of central Europe.

The Big Three met again at Yalta in southern Russia in February 1945.

Stalin was deeply suspicious of the Western powers and wanted a buffer zone to protect the Soviet Union from possible future Western aggression.

This meant establishing pro-Soviet governments along the Soviet Union's borders.

And Stalin's price for military aid against Japan: the Sakhalin and the Kuril Islands, ruled by Japan, as well as two warm-water ports and railroad rights in Manchuria.

