

4. WORLD WAR II

Axis Triumphs

In late 1940, Great Britain, with the help of arms shipments from the United States, was still hanging on tenaciously. The British hoped to bide their time until they could win allies and prepare for an attack on Germany.

Meanwhile, Russia had become a tempting target for Hitler. He believed that an expanded Germany had a right to Russian territory and that it was only a matter of time before the Russians fell.

Hitler, though, had always been wary of starting a two-front war. He knew that the two-front strategy had doomed Germany in World War I. But the success of the German blitzkrieg in the West led Hitler to believe that the Soviet Union could be conquered with relative ease.

Hitler reasoned that invading the Soviet Union in 1941 would not result in a two-front war. Since Britain was reeling from Nazi air attacks and the United States was

not in the war, Hitler believed that he could shift his attention temporarily to eastern Europe. If the Nazis could finish off the Soviets by the end of the year, they could still fight the war one front at a time.

On June 22, 1941, Hitler put his plan into effect. Three million Nazi troops were sent into the Soviet Union along a front that stretched two thousand miles. The Soviets were taken completely by surprise. Another German blitzkrieg was under way.

Initially the attack was very successful. The disorganized and unprepared Soviet troops were no match for the Nazi military machine. Within two months the Germans were just outside Leningrad. As winter approached, they were within twenty-five miles of Moscow.

The Soviets, however, soon prepared themselves for long-term resistance. As they retreated in the face of the German advance, they transferred much of their heavy industry to rural areas in Siberia and the Ural Mountains. What the Soviets

Japanese soldiers engage in street fighting in Shanghai in 1937. Note the propaganda photographer in the foreground.



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could not move, they burned or destroyed in a policy of leaving nothing but "scorched earth" for the Nazis to occupy.

Soviet industry continued to produce war materials, and the huge Soviet population kept the army strong even in defeat. The Soviets entrenched themselves in the East and prepared for a counteroffensive.

Their efforts paid off. In early 1941 the German advance ground to a halt. Hitler had been denied his quick victory, but he hoped that Nazi troops could wait out the fierce Russian winter and attack again in the spring.

Meanwhile, developments around the globe turned the European conflict into a full-blown world war.

During the late 1930s and early 1940s, the Japanese continued their policy of aggression in the Far East. They wanted to expand their empire and eliminate all American, British, and French influence in the area.

In 1936 the Japanese signed an agreement with Germany to fight the worldwide Communist movement. In 1940 Japan officially allied with Germany and Italy, expanding the Rome-Berlin Axis to include Tokyo. The following year, the Japanese signed a treaty of neutrality with the Soviet Union.

After Hitler conquered France, the Japanese advanced into French Indochina, a territory in Southeast Asia. At the same time, they continued their invasion of China.

The United States vigorously opposed the actions of the Japanese in the Far East. In 1941 the U.S. cut off trade with Japan and froze Japanese assets in the U.S. The U.S. then entered into negotiations with Japan in an attempt to convince the Japanese to withdraw from China and Indochina.

The Japanese agreed to negotiate. But on December 7, 1941, while the negotiations were taking place, the Japanese secretly launched a massive air attack on the U.S. military base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii.

The attack took the U.S. completely by surprise. Much of the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor was crippled or destroyed. The American navy was seriously weakened by the attack.

On December 8 the U.S. declared war on Japan. Three days later Germany and Italy honored their treaty obligations to Japan by declaring war on the U.S. All of the major world powers were now at war.

Japan quickly moved to attack other targets throughout the Far East. Within days of Pearl Harbor, they took over American military bases at Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines. In Southeast Asia, they took Malaya from the British and Indonesia from the Dutch. They also moved into Siam (now Thailand) and Burma. Early in 1942 the Japanese seemed poised for an attack on Australia.

By that time, most of the world's countries had taken sides in the conflict. Russia had joined the Allies after Hitler's invasion. Canada, China, Mexico, and numerous countries throughout Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East had also entered the war on the Allied side.

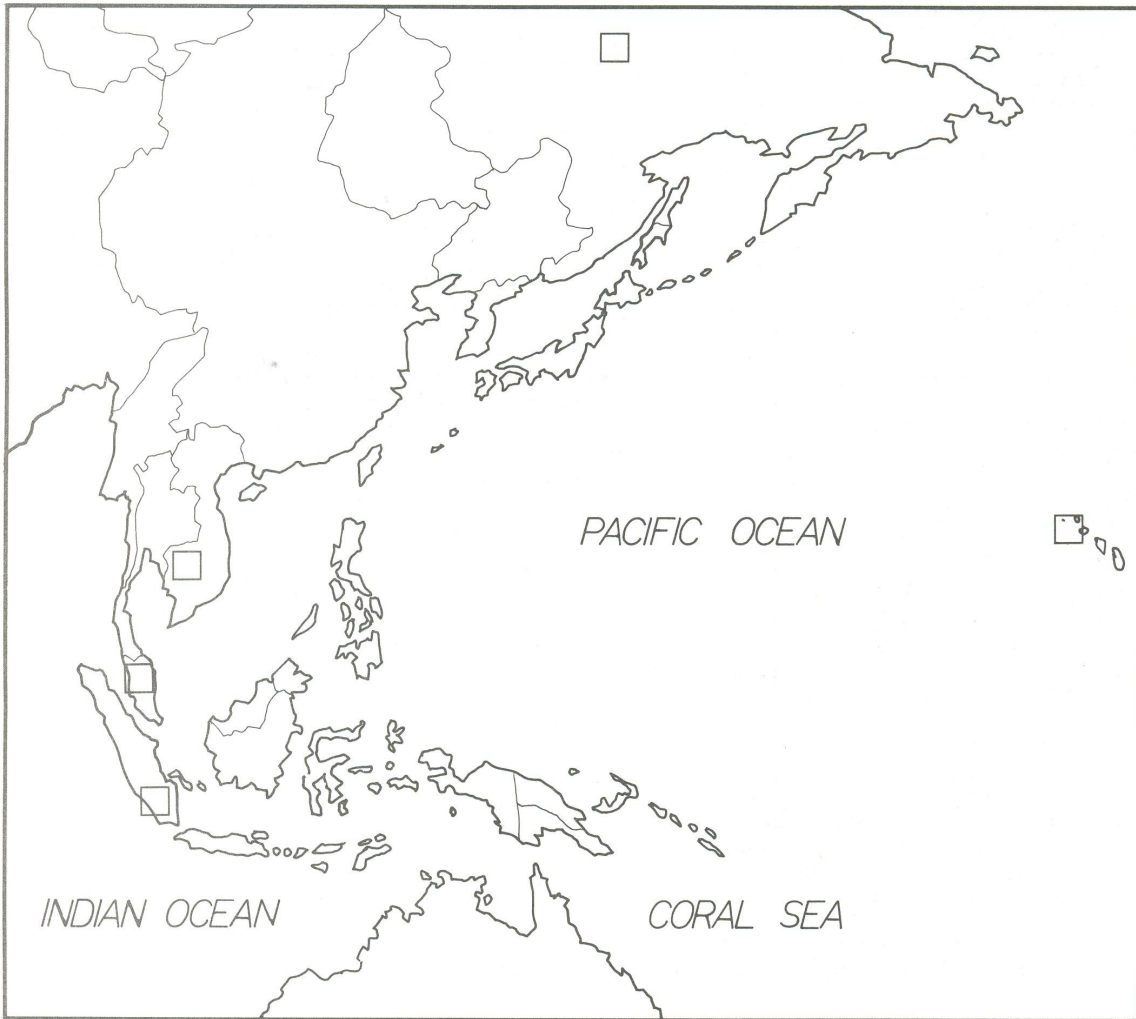
Nevertheless, the Axis powers held a tremendous advantage in the war at the beginning of 1942. The Japanese had tightened their hold on the Far East, and Hitler remained perilously close to complete control of Europe. In order to prevent a complete Axis victory, the Allies needed to act and act quickly.

4. WORLD WAR II: REVIEW

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A. Maps

DIRECTIONS: Write both the number of the descriptive phrase and the name of each of the following places in the proper location on the map below.



1. Dutch possession captured by the Japanese
2. British possession captured by the Japanese
3. area to which the Soviets transferred some of their industry after the Nazi invasion
4. U.S. military base attacked by the Japanese on December 7, 1941
5. French territory captured by the Japanese

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B. True or False

DIRECTIONS: Read each of the following statements. If the statement is true, mark "T" in the space provided. If the statement is false, mark "F" in the space and change the statement to make it true.

- _____ 6. Hitler believed that the Nazis would have to fight a two-front war.
- _____ 7. The Soviets adopted a "scorched-earth" policy toward the German invasion of their country.
- _____ 8. The Japanese signed a treaty of neutrality with the Soviet Union in 1936.
- _____ 9. In late 1941, the Japanese attacked a series of targets in the Far East.
- _____ 10. Numerous countries in Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East fought in World War II on the Axis side.

C. Cause/Effect Relationships

DIRECTIONS: In the space provided, write the cause of each of the following situations.

11. Hitler believed the Soviet Union could be defeated easily.

CAUSE: _____

12. Hitler believed that fighting the Soviets would only be a one-front war.

CAUSE: _____

13. Japan quickly moved to take over the American military bases at Guam, Wake Island, and the Philippines. They also took Malaya from the British and Indonesia from the Dutch.

CAUSE: _____

14. In 1941 the German advance through the Soviet Union ground to a halt.

CAUSE: _____

