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1942

China received substantial American and Soviet aid and diplomatic support in its war with Japan. Fearing the consequences of a threatened US oil embargo, the Japanese planned to secure access to strategic raw materials by seizing British, French and Dutch colonial territories in Southeast Asia. To prevent American interference, the Japanese launched a surprise attack on the US Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, bringing the USA into the Second World War. Germany and Italy declared war on the USA four days later.

For six months the Japanese enjoyed a spectacular run of victories, seizing the Philippines from the USA and humiliating the British by capturing their main Southeast Asian naval base at Singapore and routing them in Burma. Sensing British weakness, Indian nationalists increased their agitation for independence. Most important, the Japanese occupied the Dutch East Indies with their oilfields. In spring 1942 the Germans regained the initiative in the USSR, advancing rapidly towards the Caucasus oilfields. A German–Italian offensive in North Africa threatened British control of the Suez Canal. Earlier in 1942, Germany's Nazi leaders began to plan the war's greatest crime, the extermination of European Jews.

By the end of 1942 the Allies had begun to turn the tide of war. The British victory at El Alamein in October drove the Germans and Italians out of Egypt. Days later Anglo-American forces invaded Vichy-held Morocco and Algeria. The German army's offensive in the USSR was halted at Stalingrad in July amid bitter street fighting. A Soviet counter-offensive in November trapped nearly 300,000 Axis troops in the now ruined city: the survivors finally surrendered in February 1943.

The Japanese run of victories was halted by the USA at the naval battle of Midway, which established that the aircraft carrier, rather than the battleship, was the most important fighting unit of a battle fleet. By the end of the year, the Australians had pushed the Japanese back in New Guinea and the Americans were driving them out of the Solomon Islands.

Both sides in the Second World War put considerable resources into propaganda, using posters, the press and the popular mediums of movies and radio. Large audiences listened to Britain's BBC illegally in Nazi-dominated Europe because of its reputation for truthful reporting of events.

1939 1940

POLITICS & ECONOMY

1939 1 APR Surrender of Republican forces in Madrid ends **Spanish Civil War**: fascist dictatorship begins under Francisco Franco (to 1975).

10 JUN **Italy** declares war 1940 on France and Britain.

1939 1 SEP German invasion of **Poland**.

1939 3 SEP The UK and France declare war on Germany, beginning the **Second World War**.

1939–40 **Winter War**: Finland loses border territories after Soviet invasion.

9 APR–10 JUN German invasion of **Denmark** and **Norway**. 1940

1939 23 AUG **Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact**: Nazi–Soviet non-aggression treaty secretly agrees the partition of Poland and Soviet annexation of the Baltic states.

Finnish troops on skis in 1939 during the Winter War.

1939 27 MAY–3 JUN **Dunkirk** evacuation of British forces from France.

10 MAY–25 JUN German invasion of **Netherlands**, **Belgium** and **France**. 1940

1939 Siam is renamed **Thailand** to celebrate its avoidance of colonial rule.

25 JUN **French surrender**: France divided between German 1940 military occupation and collaborationist **government at Vichy**.

23 MAR Muslim League demands the creation of **Pakistan**, a separate state for Indian Muslims. 1940

20–31 AUG Battle of **Khalkhin Gol**, Mongolia: Red 1939 Army defeats the Japanese in a border war.

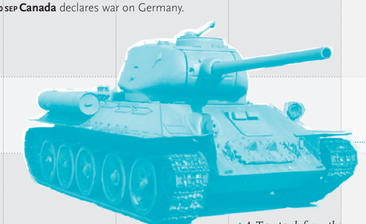
1939 17 SEP **USSR** invades Poland.

1939 3 SEPT **Australia** and **New Zealand** declare war on Germany.

1939 4 SEP **South Africa** declares war on Germany.

1939 10 SEP **Canada** declares war on Germany.

Red Army soldiers and tank in an attack during the battle of Khalkhin Gol, 1939.



A T-34 tank from the Second World War.

RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY

SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

1939 Paul Müller develops the **insecticide DDT** (Switzerland).

1939 27 AUG First flight by a **jet-powered aircraft** (Germany).

MAR The Frisch–Peierls memorandum sets out the calculations 1940 necessary to produce an **atomic bomb** (UK).

ARTS & ARCHITECTURE

Arthur Koestler, ***Darkness at Noon***, novel about Stalin's purges (UK). 1940

Ahmed Ali, *Twilight in Delhi*, Urdu novel. 1940

1939 John Steinbeck, ***The Grapes of Wrath***, great novel of Depression-era America.

Viet Harlon, ***The Jew Süss***, anti-Semitic movie comissioned by 1940 Nazi propaganda minister Josef Goebbels.

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun

1941 1942

1940 8 AUG–30 SEP **Battle of Britain** ends threat of German invasion.

1941 22 JUN **Operation Barbarossa**: German invasion of the USSR.

6 APR–1 JUN German invasion of **Yugoslavia** and **Greece**. 1941

1941–42 **Soviet Red Army** defeats the Germans outside Moscow.

2–31 MAY Britain invades **Iraq** and overthrows the pro-Nazi 1941 government of Rashid Ali.

17 JUL **Battle of Stalingrad**: decisive victory by the Red 1942–43 Army over German forces (to 2 Feb 1943).

Soviet soldiers attack among the ruins of buildings at Stalingrad in 1942.

8 JUN–14 JUL British and Free French forces overthrow 1941 French Vichy rule in **Syria** and **Lebanon**.

AUG The British suppress the **Quit India civil disobedience campaign** (to Mar 1943). 1942–43

14 JUL **Indian National Congress Party** demands immediate 1942 independence from Britain: Congress leaders are imprisoned.

25 AUG–17 SEP Britain and the USSR occupy **Iran**. 1941

15 FEB Fall of **Singapore** to the Japanese destroys British prestige in Southeast Asia. 1942

1942 APR Allies begin an airlift of supplies to **China** from India.

A look-out in London during the Battle of Britain; St Paul's cathedral is in the background.

MAY Communist nationalist organization, 1941 the **Viet Minh**, is set up by Ho Chi Minh in French Indochina.

1941–42 **Japanese conquest** of French, British, Australian, Dutch and US colonies in Southeast Asia and Western Pacific.

1940 13 SEP Italian invasion of **Egypt**.

Unprepared for the onset of winter, the German army was defeated at Moscow, Dec 1941–Jan 1942.

1942 4–16 JUN **Battle of Midway**: US naval victory over the Japanese turns the tide of war in the Pacific.

11–25 FEB British forces occupy **Italian Somaliland**. 1941

1942 JUL–NOV **Kokoda Track campaign**: Australians defeat the Japanese in New Guinea.

12–14 FEB German forces under Rommel arrive in 1941 **Libya** to support the Italians.

7 AUG **Battle of Guadalcanal**: US forces defeat the Japanese in 1942–43 their first offensive in the Pacific theatre (to 9 Feb 1943).

NOV Free French forces 1940 overthrow Vichy rule in **French Equatorial Africa**.

1940 DEC British counter-offensive drives the Italians out of **Egypt** and advances into **Libya**.

1942 5 MAY–6 NOV British invasion of Vichy-held **Madagascar**.

1941 JAN–NOV British forces liberate **Ethiopia** from Italian occupation.

8–16 NOV **Operation Torch**: Anglo-American invasion of Vichy-held Morocco and Algeria. 1942

5–31 JUL **Ecuadorian–Peruvian War**: Peru occupies Ecuadorian province of El Oro. 1941

23 OCT–4 NOV Decisive British victory over Germans and Italians at **El Alamein**, Egypt. 1942

MAR **Lend-Lease Agreement**: the USA supplies UK (and, 1941 later, other Allied nations) with war materials.

11 DEC Germany declares war on the **USA**. 1941

22 MAY **Mexico** declares war on 1942 Germany and Japan.

1942 22 AUG **Brazil** declares war on Germany and Italy.

7 DEC Japanese attack on **Pearl Harbor** brings the USA into the Second World War. 1941

7 JUN Japan invades the 1942 **Aleutian islands**, Alaska.

Pearl Harbor after the Japanese attack in 1941.

1942 20 JAN **Wannsee Conference**: Nazi leaders propose the 'Final Solution to the Jewish problem', beginning the **Holocaust**.

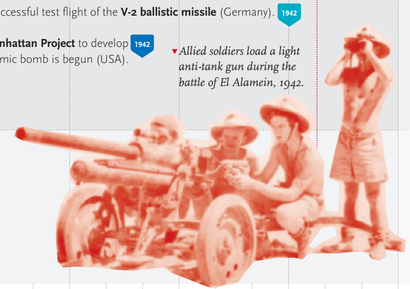
1940 SEP The most influential **tank** design of the Second World War, the **T-34**, goes into production (USSR).

DEC Enrico Fermi sets up **Chicago Pile-1**, the first atomic reactor (USA). 1942

OCT First successful test flight of the **V-2 ballistic missile** (Germany). 1942

JUN The **Manhattan Project** to develop 1942 an atomic bomb is begun (USA).

Allied soldiers load a light anti-tank gun during the battle of El Alamein, 1942.



DEC **Dmitri Shostakovitch**, *Symphony No. 7 'Leningrad'* dedicated to the besieged city. 1941

1941 MAY Orson Wells, ***Citizen Kane***, innovative movie, often considered the greatest of all time.

J. Howard Miller's poster ***We can do it!*** makes Rosie the Riveter a national icon in America. 1942

1941 JAN The BBC begins its **V Camapign** of broadcasting to occupied Europe.

Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec