

## GERMAN EXPANSION

- 1933 – The Nazi Party came to power in Germany (the Third Reich forms). Hitler began to rebuild the military in direct violation of the Treaty of Versailles (secretly at first, and in public by 1935 – the Western democracies do nothing).
- March 1936 – Germans occupied the **Rhineland** with troops – again violating the Treaty of Versailles and again resulting in no reaction from the Western democracies.
- March 1938 – **Austria** was annexed by the Third Reich.
- Sept 1938 – **Munich Agreement**. Britain and France agreed to Hitler’s demands to ‘free’ oppressed German people that lived within the Czech Republic. German troops occupied the **Sudetenland** in the first weeks of October.
- March 1939 – Germany seized the remainder of western **Czechoslovakia**. The western democracies finally realized Hitler’s true intention of conquest. The southeastern portion became the Slovak Republic, allied with Germany.
- April 1939. Similarly, Italy invaded Albania and then become officially allied with Germany with the “**Pact of Steel**” in May.
- 1 September 1939 **Germany invaded Poland** with two Army Groups. On 17 Sept the Soviet Union, who had previously signed a non-aggression agreement with Germany (Molotov-Rippentrop Pact: 23 August 1939) invaded and occupied eastern Poland. France and Britain declared war on Germany.
- 27 September 1940. **Tripartite Pact**: The Axis Powers formally came into being. Germany, Japan and Italy signed this agreement to mutually support each other in their quest to conquer their spheres of influence. Hungary and Romania joined in November ’40 and Bulgaria joined in March 41.
- October 1939-April 1940. **The ‘Phony War’**. Germany built up forces to invade France while France established defenses behind her Maginot Line (a series of strong fortifications on the French-German Border). Since the Maginot Line did not extend beyond that border, the French positioned their more mobile forces, including the British Expeditionary Force, on the Belgium Border, which would cross that border should the Germans attempt a repeat of the Schlieffen plan they had executed at the beginning of WW I. This, the Dyer Plan, would meet and defeat any German attack trying to swing around the Maginot Line, through Belgium/Netherlands.
- 9 April – German forces occupied **Denmark**
- 9 April – June. Germans invaded **Norway**. These two actions protect the German trade routes with Sweden (Iron Ore) and assisted Germany to execute her future submarine campaign in the Atlantic.
- 10 May 1940 – **Battle of France**. The Germans invaded the Netherlands and Belgium (bypassing the Maginot Line). Britain and France moved to counter this attack.
- German Army Group A (containing the majority of the Panzer Units) attacks through the Ardennes Forrest and cuts off two French Armies and the BEF from the rest of the French Forces. These troops either surrendered or were evacuated at Dunkirk.
- 22 June – **The Battle of France ends**. After the disaster in the Low Countries, the French Army becomes almost totally ineffective, and the Germans easily attack through northern and eastern France. France

surrenders and Vichy France was established, which is Southern France, Corsica and the French Colonies that now became essentially allied with Germany.

- July – October 1940. **Battle of Britain**. An attempt by Germany to gain air superiority, in order to invade Britain (*Operation Sea Lion*). The Germans failed and eventually called off the Operation.

NOT SHOWN: Sept 1940-Nov 1942: **North Africa Campaign**. A series of see-saw battles between German/Italian Forces (Libya) and the British (Egypt).

- October 1940. Italy attempted to invade Greece, but failed miserably. They actually lose half of Albania, and the British sent forces to defend Greece.
- April 1941. Germany goes to the aid of Italy by invading **Greece**, and consequently **Yugoslavia** when the Yugoslav government was overthrown, cancelling her previous agreement to allow the Germans to pass through their county.
- 20-31 May 1941. Germany seized **Crete** with an almost purely Airborne Assault. They suffered such great losses, they never again conducted a major airborne assault.
- 22 June – December 1941. **Operation Barbarossa**. Three German Army Groups attacked into the Soviet Union, but were finally stopped just short of Moscow by stiff Soviet resistance, strategic overreach and the winter.

## NORTH AFRICA AND ITALY

- 8 November 1942: **Operation Torch**. Knowing that they are not yet strong enough for a direct assault into Europe, but realizing they must attack somewhere, the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff decided to attack North Africa to assist the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army destroy the German/Italian Forces that were fighting in the vicinity of Egypt. At three landing sights, the Allies landed in Morocco and Algeria and quickly defeat the Vichy forces there.
- 10 November 1942: Germans occupied Southern France and Corsica as the Vichy government began to topple (due to defections in N. Africa).
- November 1942 – The allies advanced toward Tunisia to seize critical supply ports. However, the Germans rushed troops into Tunisia from Italy/Sicily and form the 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Army. The Germans successfully halted the Allied advance just short of their goal. The British 1<sup>st</sup> Army was now forced to go on the defense and wait for supplies and reinforcements to arrive from their very long supply lines, as well as wait for better weather. A French and American Corps occupied positions to the south of the main British Corps. In early February, Panzer Army Afrika (Rommel) arrived in Tunisia after being driven from Egypt by the 8<sup>th</sup> Army.
- Rommel proposed that the combined German Armies attack the weak allied right flank to attempt to cut the 1<sup>st</sup> Br Army from its supply lines prior to the 8<sup>th</sup> Army's arrival in force.
- Feb 1943. **Battle of Kasserine Pass**: This battle was a tactical defeat for the Americans, but an operational failure for the Germans who are unable to follow up on their initial success. The 8<sup>th</sup> Army finally arrived in force and the two German Armies surrendered in May 1943.

With the Allies still unprepared to invade Europe, a decision was made at the Casablanca Conference to attack into Sicily (the decision to invade Italy was made with the success of the Sicilian operation)

- 10 July 43: 15<sup>th</sup> Army Group (AG) with the US 7<sup>th</sup> Army (Patton) and the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army (Montgomery) invade Sicily (**Operation Husky**). 505<sup>th</sup> Parachute Regt (82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division) and 1<sup>st</sup> British Airborne Division assist.
- 10 July – 17 August 43: Sicily was conquered. The US 7<sup>th</sup> Army attacked up the western side of the island, protecting the flank of the British 8<sup>th</sup> Army that attacked up the eastern side. The Germans were able to evacuate much of their men and equipment.
- 3 Sept 43: British 8<sup>th</sup> Army invaded the 'toe' of Italy as a diversion (**Operation Baytown**). The US 5<sup>th</sup> Army (Clark) then made the Allied main amphibious assault (**Operation Avalanche**) at Salerno on 9 September, while the 1<sup>st</sup> British Airborne Division conducted a supporting amphibious assault (**Operation Slapstick**) at the 'heel' of Italy. Salerno was a very difficult operation for the allies, but poor German coordination resulted in a successful invasion.
- Just prior to the Salerno invasion, Italy surrendered to the Allies. This was announced during the invasion to create havoc for the Germans. The Germans, however, had anticipated this capitulation and rapidly disarmed the Italian forces.
- 16 Sept – 8 Oct 43: **Movement to the Gustav Line**. The British 8<sup>th</sup> Army linked up with the US 5<sup>th</sup> Army by 16 Sept and the Germans (under Luftwaffe Field Marshall Kesselring) withdrew to and held the Gustav line by 8 October.
- July-Nov 43: After two failed German offensives (Stalingrad in 1942 and Kursk in July 1943), the Soviet Union begin the 1<sup>st</sup> of their major offensives to push the Germans back to Germany. This offensive occurred along the majority of the eastern front and reached the Dnieper River.

## INVASION OF EUROPE

- 24 December 1943: Montgomery is named the 21<sup>st</sup> AG commander (the US 1<sup>st</sup> Army and the British 2<sup>nd</sup> Army) and the final preparations for the invasion of Europe (**Operation Overlord**) began.
- Fall 1943: With the capture of Foggia in Italy, the US Army Air Force now had two locations to conduct the **Strategic Bombing** of the German industry and resources. The 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force had begun limited operations from England in the summer of 1942, and now with the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Italy (and with the British Bomber command conducting night raids against German moral) the US Strategic bombers conducted large, 1000 bomber raids (with emphasis on transportation and oil production) deep into enemy territory. These initial raids proved to be very costly, but continued through the rest of the war.
- 22 Jan 1944: After continuously unsuccessful attacks on the Monte Casino and the rest of the Gustav Line, the 15<sup>th</sup> AG attempted to break the stalemate by conducting another major amphibious landing with the US VI Corps at Anzio (**Operation Shingle**). While the landing was virtually unopposed, the US Corps Commander, General Lucas, failed to advance. Simultaneously, the drive by the US 5<sup>th</sup> Army (to link up with VI Corps) failed again to break the Gustav line.
- 16-19 Feb 44: The Germans counter-attacked the US beachhead, and almost pushed them back to the sea, but ultimately failed. Anzio now turned into a siege until May.
- 19-25 Feb 44: **Bomber Offensive**. The US orient on the destruction of the German aircraft industry. The scale and success of the attacks resulted in it being called '**Big Week**' after the fact.
- US Fighter Planes were now able to escort the bombers all the way to their targets and back (due to drop tanks). They (and the heavily defended bombers) destroyed so many German fighter planes, that air

superiority was assured for the coming Overlord invasion. The Germans can now only defend their most critical industrial locations.

- Jan-Apr 44: Soviet Spring Offensive frees Leningrad from its two year siege and pushes into the Ukraine.
- 11 May – 4 June 44: In attempt to draw German units into the Italian Theater (and thus away from the Overlord Invasion) the 15<sup>th</sup> AG conducted **Operation Diadem** and finally broke the Gustav Line. The 5<sup>th</sup> Army linked up with the VI Corps at Anzio and entered Rome on 4 June (two days prior to Overlord).
- 6 June 44: **Operation Overlord** – 3 Airborne Divisions (82<sup>nd</sup>, 101<sup>st</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> British) landed in Normandy in the early hours, to protect the flanks of the amphibious landing sites.
- 6 June 44: **Operation Overlord** – 21<sup>st</sup> AG landed in Normandy on 5 beachheads: Utah (4<sup>th</sup> ID), Omaha (1<sup>st</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> ID), Gold (50<sup>th</sup> British ID), Juno, (3<sup>rd</sup> Canadian ID) and Sword (3<sup>rd</sup> British ID).
- Allied air forces successfully conducted strikes which slowed and even prevented German reinforcements from arriving at the Normandy beachheads.
- June-Oct 44: After the fall of Rome, the 15<sup>th</sup> AG was able to push the Germans north on the Italian Peninsula. They quickly break the German Gothic line but cannot push much further and the opposing forces settled into a static line for the winter/spring of 44/45.

## BREAKOUT

- 25 July 1944. **Operation Cobra**. After an immense buildup of forces and the slow expansion of the allied beachhead, the US 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Air forces (strategic and tactical) conduct a concentrated ‘carpet bombing’ mission which assisted in the breakout attack of the US 1<sup>st</sup> Army through the very difficult bocage countryside.
- 1 August 44: With this breakout, the US 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group (Bradley) was formed – US 1<sup>st</sup> Army (Hodges) and US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army (Patton).
- 1-25 August 44: **Patton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> Army** poured through and **exploits the breakout** created by *Operation Cobra* and attacked in two directions – Brittany and the Seine River. With this rapid movement, the German 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer Armies are almost cut off, but escape with a large portion of their men (but not equipment) at the Falaise Gap when the Canadian 1<sup>st</sup> Army failed to rapidly link up with the US 3<sup>rd</sup> Army. Paris was liberated on 25 August.
- 15 August 44: **Operation Anvil (Dragoon)** – US 7<sup>th</sup> Army landed in Southern France in support of the attack in Normandy.
- June-August 44: The Soviets crush the German Army Group Center and reach the outskirts of Warsaw.
- 25 August – 15 September 44: Eisenhower takes over direct control of the ground battle from Montgomery (1 September) and the 21<sup>st</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Army Groups attacked along a ‘**Broad Front**’ toward the Rhine River. The 12<sup>th</sup> Army Group linked up the newly formed 6<sup>th</sup> AG (Devers) which contained the US 7<sup>th</sup> and French 1<sup>st</sup> Armies. Also, the 9<sup>th</sup> Army (Simpson) is formed in 5 September and clears the rest of Brittany (The port of Brest). General Clark became the 15<sup>th</sup> AG commander in October.

**Operation Market-Garden**: 21<sup>st</sup> AG’s attempt to rapidly cross many rivers/canals in the Netherlands (2 part operation)

- 17 Sept 44: **Operation Market** - 101<sup>st</sup>, 82<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> British Airborne divisions are dropped to capture a series of bridges located between Arnhem and the British front lines.
- 17-20 September 44: **Operation Garden** - British XXX Corps attacks to link up with the Airborne (ABN) units and cross the captured bridges. The XXX Corps is finally stopped after it links up with the US 82<sup>nd</sup> ABN just short of the British 1<sup>st</sup> ABN at Arnhem. Only 2,200 of that surrounded division escaped back to British lines.
- August – December 44: Soviet offensive to clear the Balkans. Romania and Bulgaria surrender and join the Allies.
- Nov 8 – 15 Dec 44: Eisenhower shifted the **Main Effort to the 12 AG**. Both the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Armies attacked to the German “West Wall”. This was also the time that 1<sup>st</sup> Army fights the costly battle of the Hurtgen Forrest. The 9<sup>th</sup> Army, initially paced between 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Armies, was moved to the 12 AG’s northern boundary. Bradley, anticipating a future transfer of forces to Montgomery, made the shift as he did not want to lose his veteran Army.

## Battle of The Bulge and Final German Defeat

- Ardennes Offensive (**Operation Watch on the Rhine**) The Germans massed the 6<sup>th</sup> SS Panzer, 5<sup>th</sup> Panzer and 7<sup>th</sup> Armies for a final counter-attack against the Western Allies. Hitler planned to split the US from the British at the lightest defended portion of the American line – the Ardennes (the same location that they concentrated their panzer forces to defeat the French in 1940). This attack would then continue to the coast and capture the critical supply port of Antwerp. This would become known as the Battle of the Bulge.
- 15-24 Dec 44: **Battle of the Bulge (1)** - Germany attacked and created a ‘bulge’ in the allied line.
- As the 1<sup>st</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Armies are cut off from the 12<sup>th</sup> AG (due to the ‘bulge’), command of these two armies shift to the 21<sup>st</sup> AG.
- 20-21 Dec 44: 3<sup>rd</sup> Army displaced from its front lines and reoriented to attack into the southern portion of the ‘bulge’. Patton began his attack on 22 December.
- 26 Dec – 7 Feb 45: **Battle of the Bulge (2)** - the 12<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> AGs pushed the Germans back to their start line.
- Jan – Apr 45: The Soviets pushed to the Oder river in the north, followed by attacks in Hungary and Austria in the south.
- 22 Feb – 21 March: **Rhineland Campaign**. All Army Groups pushed forward to the Rhine River. By chance, the US 1<sup>st</sup> Army was able to capture a bridge still intact on 7 March at Remagen and created an unexpected bridgehead on the east side of the Rhine River. (The 1<sup>st</sup> Army was returned to 12 AG after the Battle of the Bulge)
- 22 & 23 March: The US 3<sup>rd</sup> and British 2<sup>nd</sup> Armies conducted river crossings of the Rhine.
- 28 March – 7 May: Attack and occupation of Germany. The German Army Group B (Model) is captured in the Ruhr Pocket. The 15<sup>th</sup> AG made a final push to capture the rest of Italy and the US 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Armies linked up on 4 May.
- 15 Apr – 6 May: Soviets attacked into Eastern Germany and captured Berlin. Hitler committed suicide on 30 April and the Germans surrendered on 7 May.



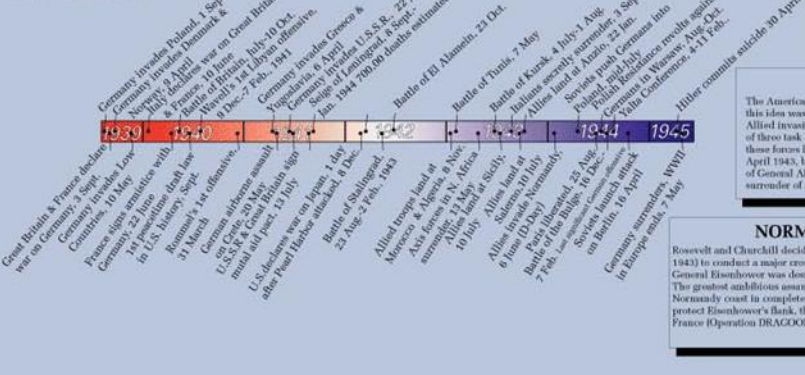
## THE SECOND WORLD WAR THE EUROPEAN THEATER 1942 - 1945



- City or Town
- National Capital
- - National Boundaries
- ★ Battle Site
- Axis Advance
- Allied Advance

- Neutral Countries
- Axis Controlled (Max. Extent)
- Axis
- Allies

### TIMELINE



#### WORLD WAR TWO IN EUROPE

World War II began in Europe on 1 September 1939 with Germany invading Poland. United States' involvement started on 11 December 1941, only four days after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, when Germany and Italy unexpectedly declared war on the United States. British Prime Minister Churchill met with President Roosevelt in Washington D.C. (22 December 1941 - 14 January 1942), and decided to defeat Germany first.

#### NORTH AFRICA

The Americans wanted to invade continental Europe in 1943, but this idea was deemed premature and was cancelled in favor of an Allied invasion of French North Africa. Operation TORCH consisted of two task forces which landed on 8 November 1942. Moving east, these forces linked up with general Montgomery's Eighth Army in April 1943, becoming 18th Army Group under the overall command of General Alexander. By 12 May 1943 this unit had forced the surrender of all Axis forces in North Africa.

#### ITALIAN LANDINGS

Operation HUSKY, the invasion of Sicily, began on 9 July 1943, and after that island was cleared, the mainland of Italy was assaulted on 3 September 1943. Allied forces continued to "slog" their way up the Italian peninsula until 2 May 1945. Amphibious operations at Salerno and at Anzio were attempts to outflank the Germans in Italy.

#### NORMANDY LANDING

Roosevelt and Churchill decided at the Trident Conference (15-25 May 1943) to conduct a major cross-Channel invasion of Europe in June 1944. General Eisenhower was designated to command Operation OVERLORD. The greatest amphibious assault yet known to history began on the Normandy coast in complete tactical surprise on D-Day, 6 June 1944. To protect Eisenhower's flank, the U.S. Seventh Army landed in southern France (Operation DRAGOON) on 15 August 1944.

#### THE BREAKOUT

The breakout from the Normandy beachhead took place in July 1944, and the offensive continued using General Eisenhower's "broad front" strategy. Attempts to breach the German Siegfried Line blunted the Allied offensive. The Germans then launched an offensive - the ensuing fight being the "Battle of the Bulge" - through the thinly held Ardennes Forest in December 1944. The Allies halted the German offensive in January 1945 and continued the attack, crossing the Rhine River in March 1945 and encircling the Ruhr area in April 1945. This resulted, along with the Soviet pressure from the east, in the German collapse and surrender on 8 May 1945.