



## POLITICAL LEADERS Allies

### FRANKLIN DELANO ROOSEVELT



When World War II began, many Americans strongly opposed involvement in foreign conflicts. President Roosevelt maintained official US **neutrality** but supported measures like the Lend-Lease Act, which provided invaluable aid to countries battling Axis aggression. After Pearl Harbor and Germany's declaration of war on the United States, Roosevelt rallied the country to fight the Axis powers as part of the **Grand Alliance** with Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-128765.)

### WINSTON CHURCHILL



In the 1930s, Churchill fiercely opposed Western **appeasement** of Nazi Germany. He became prime minister in May 1940 following a German **blitzkrieg** (lightning war) against Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, and France. He then played a pivotal role in building a global alliance to stop the German juggernaut. One of the greatest orators of the century, Churchill raised the spirits of his countrymen through the war's darkest days as Germany threatened to invade Great Britain and unleashed a devastating nighttime bombing program on London and other major cities.

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USW33-019093-C.)

### JOSEPH STALIN



Stalin rose through the ranks of the Communist Party to emerge as the absolute ruler of the Soviet Union. In the 1930s, he conducted a reign of terror against his political opponents, including much of the country's top military leadership. His purge of Red Army generals suspected of being disloyal to him left his country desperately unprepared when Germany invaded in June 1941. Soon after, Stalin entered into an alliance with Great Britain, and eventually the United States, and directed the **counteroffensive** that drove the German army from Soviet soil.

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-32833.)

## CHARLES DE GAULLE



De Gaulle was a general in the French Army in the 1930s. When Germany invaded and conquered France in June 1940, he flew to London rather than submit to the Franco-German **armistice** signed by French Prime Minister Philippe Pétain. From London, he pleaded with his countrymen to defy the new **Vichy** government of Pétain and vigorously resist the German occupation. Although Great Britain and the United States eventually recognized de Gaulle as the legitimate leader of France, neither country treated the Free French movement he headed as an equal partner with the Allied powers.

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-96046.)

## POLITICAL LEADERS Axis

### ADOLF HITLER



Hitler, the Austrian-born leader of Germany's National Socialist (Nazi) Party, was appointed chancellor in 1933 and quickly established a totalitarian government. Hitler's regime was based upon his belief in German racial superiority and a commitment to expanding Germany's borders by political and military coercion. By early 1939, he had formed an alliance with **fascist** Italy, annexed Austria and Czechoslovakia, and rebuilt his country's armed forces, which had been dramatically reduced by the terms of the Treaty of Versailles after World War I. By 1942, Hitler's forces had overrun Poland, Denmark, Norway, France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Greece, Yugoslavia, and much of the Soviet Union.

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-48839.)

### BENITO MUSSOLINI

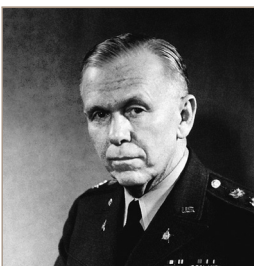


Mussolini seized power in 1922 and established the first **fascist** government in Europe. An extreme **nationalist** bent on building a modern-day Roman Empire, he conquered Ethiopia and Albania and threatened other Balkan states. In 1936, he sent troops and military aircraft to Spain to support a military coup led by **fascist** General Francisco Franco. During the war, Italian troops fought alongside German troops in North Africa, the Balkans, and the Soviet Union.

(Image: Library of Congress: LC-DIG-ggbain-37518.)

## MILITARY LEADERS Allies

### GENERAL GEORGE C. MARSHALL



President Roosevelt appointed Marshall US Army chief of staff on September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland. An ingenious military planner, he inherited the herculean task of rebuilding the US Army after it had been greatly reduced in size and strength in the isolationist climate of the 1920s. Under his leadership, the US Army grew from under 200,000 to over 3,000,000 soldiers and airmen by late 1942.

(Image: US Army, DA-SD-05-00593.)

## GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER



In November 1942, Eisenhower, who had no previous combat experience, commanded Operation Torch, the Anglo-American invasion of western North Africa. Two years later, President Roosevelt named him supreme commander of the Allied forces that landed in Normandy on D-Day. Eisenhower then directed the ensuing campaign that liberated northern Europe and forced Germany's surrender. His calm, deliberative leadership as supreme commander kept the Anglo-American coalition together.

(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 208-PU-587-29.)

## FIELD MARSHAL HENRY "HAP" ARNOLD



Arnold, who was taught to fly by the Wright brothers, commanded the US Army Air Force before and during World War II. He turned what had been a woefully weak air arm into the most powerful aerial strike force in the world. The Air Force's strategic bombing campaigns against Germany and Japan helped bring an end to the war and inaugurated the modern atomic age with the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—the fatal, and controversial, blows that ended World War II.

(Image: U.S. Army Military History Institute.)

## SIR HAROLD ALEXANDER



Alexander commanded the 1st British Division during the Battle of France in June 1940 and rose to become Allied supreme commander in the Mediterranean. A man of great personal courage, he is best known for taking command of the British Expeditionary Force during the Dunkirk evacuation, which led to the rescue of more than 338,000 British, French, and other Allied troops from the northern French port during the fighting that ended with the German conquest of France. He later commanded the British First Army in North Africa, and along with his senior field commander, General Bernard L. Montgomery, led the British **counteroffensive** at El Alamein, a critical victory over Axis forces threatening Egypt and the Suez Canal.

(Image: Imperial War Museums, TR 2702.)

## MAJOR GENERAL OMAR N. BRADLEY



Bradley, who began the war as commandant of the Infantry School at Fort Benning, rose rapidly to become one of America's most successful commanders. Early in the North Africa campaign, a baptism by fire for the US Army, he was Eisenhower's "eyes and ears" on the ground and later was appointed second in command to General George Patton. He and Patton were the top US commanders in the Sicilian campaign in the late summer of 1943. In June 1944, he commanded the American ground forces that landed on Omaha and Utah beaches in the Normandy invasion. With the help of the British, he directed the **route** of the German army in France. His straightforward and unpretentious manner endeared him to famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle, who dubbed him "the GI's General."

(Image: Library of Congress, LC-DIG-hec-21734.)

## FIELD MARSHAL SIR BERNARD LAW MONTGOMERY



In August 1942, “Monty” assumed command of the British Eighth Army in Egypt and won a great victory at El Alamein in November 1942 that made him the war’s most successful British general. He commanded British forces in the conquest of Sicily in the summer of 1943 and was the Allied land commander in the Normandy invasion. He was nearly replaced after his failure to quickly capture Caen, an important objective in the operation, but he recovered to lead his army group on the drive into Germany. Montgomery was a fearless and stirring leader, popular with his men but condescending toward fellow commanders, including Eisenhower, his superior.

(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 286-MP-UK-1635.)

## GENERAL GEORGE S. PATTON



Brilliant, inspiring, and volatile, Patton was one of the greatest yet most controversial commanders in the European war. He won his first victories in Operation Torch, leading the US Second Corps at El Guettar. He then headed the US Seventh Army’s rapid advance across northern Sicily, beating Montgomery to Messina. That campaign was nearly his last, however, after he verbally abused and slapped two GIs hospitalized for combat fatigue, accusing them of cowardice. Eisenhower considered him too valuable to lose and sent him to England to prepare the Third Army for the campaign in Normandy. Patton returned to prominence after the D-Day landings. Organizing a series of spectacular armored assaults that helped drive the German army from France, he pioneered the American version of **blitzkrieg**—lightning war by tanks, support planes, and mobile infantry. In March 1945, he crossed the Rhine River at Metz and drove into the heart of Germany. Patton spent the remainder of the war securing Czechoslovakia and Austria.

(Image: US Military Personnel Records Center.)

## MARSHAL GEORGI ZHUKOV



Tough, outspoken, and resilient, Zhukov managed to survive Stalin’s prewar military purge of his general staff. Recognizing his genius, Stalin appointed him chief of the General Staff in January 1941. When German invaders overwhelmed the Red Army that summer, Stalin called on him to command Soviet forces at Leningrad and in the defense of Moscow. After saving Moscow, Zhukov halted the Axis advance at Stalingrad and encircled the German Sixth Army in November 1942. He then planned the culminating campaign of the war in Europe—the gigantic **counteroffensive** that drove the German army from the Soviet Union to the gates of Berlin. Some historians consider Zhukov the greatest commander of World War II.

(Image: Getty Images.)



## MILITARY LEADERS Axis

### REICHSMARSCHALL HERMANN GOERING



A WWI flying ace and commander of the famed Richthofen squadron, Goering became commander in chief of the WWII German air force, the *Luftwaffe*. He joined the Nazi Party in 1922 and became commander of Hitler's bodyguard. Goering created the Nazi system of repression, which included the state secret police (the **Gestapo**), the first two concentration camps (primarily for critics of the regime), and his own intelligence system. In the 1930s, Goering helped build the modern *Luftwaffe*, a formidable contributor to Hitler's early victories, and was at the height of his powers in 1940 when he was promoted to *reichsmarschall*. In 1941, he signed the decree that empowered Reinhard Heydrich to move ahead with preparations for the final solution of the so-called "Jewish problem." After the war, Goering escaped execution for war crimes by committing suicide, using cyanide smuggled to him in prison.

(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 242-HB-32811.)

### REICHSFÜHRER HEINRICH HIMMLER



An early member of the Nazi Party, Himmler, a former chicken farmer, became leader of the paramilitary **Schutzstaffel (SS)** and head of Germany's infamous secret police, the **Gestapo**. From mid-1941, he directed Hitler's systematic plan to incarcerate and execute millions of Jews and other people deemed "undesirable" by the Nazi government.

(Image: Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-R99621.)

### FIELD MARSHAL FRIEDRICH PAULUS



Paulus, a great admirer of Hitler, was one of the chief planners of Operation Barbarossa, the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. He took command of the German Sixth Army in January 1942 and led it to Stalingrad, a sprawling industrial stronghold on the Volga River. The army reached the outskirts of the city in August 1942 but was stopped that fall and winter in the bloodiest battle of the war. When Paulus's army was surrounded in January 1943 and surrender was inevitable, Hitler promoted him to field marshal. This action was an invitation to commit suicide—no German field marshal had ever surrendered. But the next day, Paulus and his staff did just that, and were taken prisoner by the Soviets.

(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 242-GAP-102P-1.)

## FIELD MARSHAL ERWIN ROMMEL



Rommel, a decorated WWI veteran and early theorist of mobile warfare, took command of Axis forces in North Africa in early 1941 following his stunning success in leading a **panzer** division in the invasion of France. Known as the “Desert Fox” after a series of early victories against British forces in North Africa’s western desert, Rommel came perilously close to conquering Egypt and seizing the Suez Canal. In early 1943, however, his battered army was defeated in Tunisia after Rommel returned to Germany on sick leave. In June 1944, he commanded German divisions defending the Normandy beachhead. The following month, he was implicated in a plot to assassinate Hitler. Though he had no direct part in the plot, Rommel committed suicide rather than face a public trial.

*(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 242-GAP-102R-2.)*

## GRAND ADMIRAL KARL DOENITZ



A decorated WWI U-boat captain, Doenitz took charge of Germany’s submarine operations in 1935. From 1943 to 1945, he was commander in chief of the German navy, and in 1945 became Hitler’s chosen successor to lead Germany in the event of the *führer*’s death. Early in the war, his U-boats decimated Allied shipping, striking hardest in the central North Atlantic, where for a time his “wolf packs” of submarines threatened to cut the vital lifeline of troops and supplies from the United States to Britain and the Soviet Union. Anglo-American code breakers, long-range Liberator bombers, and naval hunter-killer teams ended the U-boat menace in the North Atlantic in May 1943. Had they not, the Doenitz wolf packs would have preyed upon the D-Day invasion fleet.

*(Image: National Archives and Records Administration, 242-HP-1-7.)*

## FIELD MARSHAL ALBERT KESSELRING



Kesselring commanded **Luftwaffe** operations during the invasions of Poland and France, and in 1941 was appointed commander in chief of Germany’s Mediterranean forces. An astute defensive strategist, he strengthened Axis positions and made effective use of limited troops and resources. Although Kesselring rushed reinforcements into Tunisia to counter the Allied landings, his position became unsustainable when Montgomery arrived there to join forces with the Americans. In the summer of 1943, Kesselring’s army fought a bold but unsuccessful defensive battle in Sicily. Hemmed in by Patton and Montgomery, he withdrew his army across the Straits of Messina. That army, reinforced by Hitler, nearly drove the Allied invasion force back into the sea at Salerno. In early 1944, Kesselring kept Allied forces trapped on the beaches of Anzio, Italy, before they eventually broke out and liberated Rome days before the Normandy landings. Hitler put Kesselring in charge of the final defense of Germany in March 1945.

*(Image: Imperial War Museums, HU 51040.)*