

KEY PLAYERS

Josef Stalin
Soviet Premier



Winston Churchill
British Prime Minister

Adolf Hitler
Founder and leader of the Nazi Party, German Chancellor and guiding spirit of the Third Reich



JANUARY

Jan 14, Poland: Soviet forces cut railway line at **Kracow**
15-16: Red Army encircles **Warsaw**
Jan 16, Berlin: Hitler returns to Chancellery – **Reichstag** – and is forced to take cover in his bunker as Allied bombers attack city
Jan 17-18, Warsaw: Polish capital liberated after five years of Nazi occupation. Soviet government established
Jan 18, Auschwitz: Germans order immediate evacuation of inmates to concentration camps in Germany

Jan 27, Berlin: With Red Army just 160km away, city's streets are cleared of refugees to make way for reinforcements
Jan 27, Auschwitz: Horrified Russian troops enter Nazis' biggest death camp. More than 1.5 million people – including 1.1 million Jews – were murdered at Auschwitz between 1942 and 1945 in Hitler's **Final Solution**



Georgi Zhukov
Commander of Russian forces



Jan 31: Led by **Marshal Zhukov**, Red Army crosses German border into **Pomerania** – 95 miles from Berlin, cutting vital Nazi rail links with **Danzig**

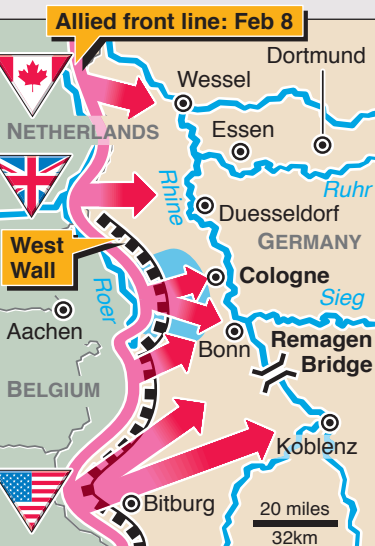
Victory in Europe – the fall of Nazi Germany

JANUARY 7, 1945 Josef Stalin agrees to Winston Churchill's call for a Soviet offensive to ease pressure on the Allies' drive towards Germany from the west. The Red Army campaign begins five days later when 160 divisions attack German positions in Poland and East Prussia – and the stage is set for the downfall of the Third Reich



FEBRUARY

Feb 3: U.S. warplanes drop 3,000 tonnes of bombs on Berlin, setting alight 13 square kilometres of city



Feb 8-10: RAF attacks key targets, including V2 rocket sites. British and Canadian forces breach **West Wall (Siegfried Line)**, to reach **Rhine**. Germans blow up floodgates on **Roer**, flooding area west of **Cologne** in bid to halt Allied advance

Feb 14: RAF and U.S. fire-bomb **Dresden**, killing more than 50,000

Heinrich Himmler
SS chief and second most powerful figure of Nazi regime



Feb 19: Himmler makes initial overtures for peace talks with Western Allies

Feb 21-22: RAF and U.S. bomb key Nazi transport links, dropping 400,000 incendiaries on **Nuremberg**

Feb 25: After three months of fierce fighting U.S. 3rd Armoured Division crosses **Roer** – advances on **Cologne**

MARCH

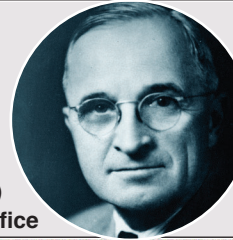
Mar 3: Finland joins war on Germany
Mar 7: Allies capture **Cologne** and strategic **Remagen Bridge**, only bridge left intact by retreating German troops

Mar 8-25: Allied forces fight their way across Rhine, setting up 56km-wide bridgehead on east bank. Hitler is unable to stop Allied troops pouring across Rhine. Red Army prepares for final assault on Berlin

APRIL

Apr 1: Believing that Allies are mounting operation to capture Berlin, Stalin orders Red Army to take it first

April 12: U.S. President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** dies. Vice president **Harry S. Truman** (right) sworn into office



Allied front line: Apr 18

Soviet front line: Apr 19



Apr 16: Allied armies halt advance on Berlin to give Soviets a free hand. 2,500,000 Russian troops, supported by over 6,000 tanks and 7,500 aircraft, begin final drive towards Berlin. Hitler retreats to his bunker in Reichstag

Apr 23: Zhukov's forces battle to within 150 metres of Reichstag

Apr 25: U.S. and Soviet troops meet at Torgau on Elbe River



Apr 28: Hitler's main ally, Italian dictator **Benito Mussolini**, executed by partisans

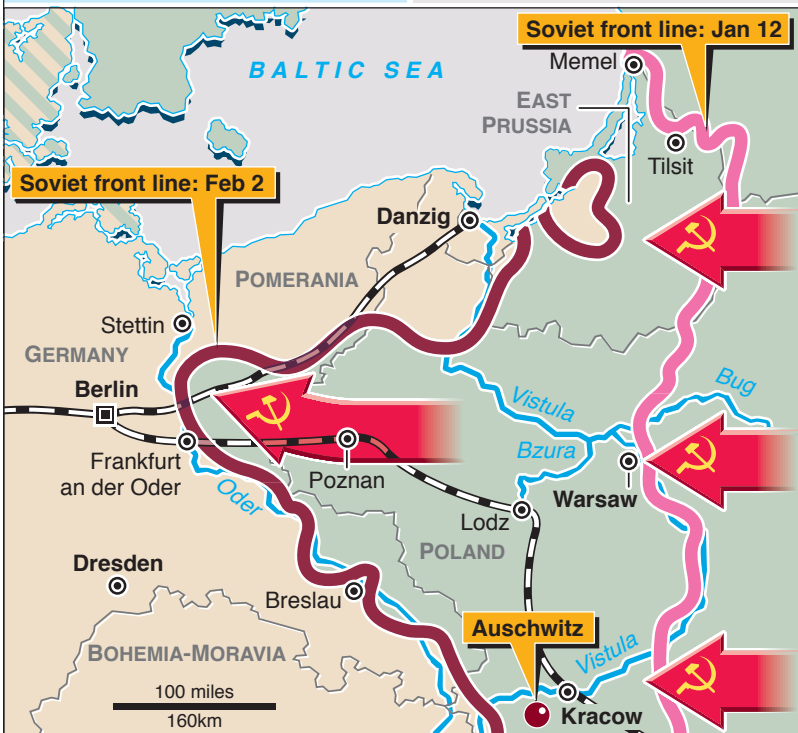
Apr 30: Adolf Hitler poisons his wife of 36 hours, **Eva Braun**, before committing suicide. Bodies are doused in petrol and burnt

May 1: Berlin falls to Red Army

May 2: Zhukov accepts German surrender in Berlin. War in Italy finally ends with surrender of almost 500,000 German troops

May 4: British Field Marshal **Bernard Montgomery** accepts surrender of all German forces in Netherlands, Denmark and north-west Germany

May 7: Germany signs unconditional surrender of "all forces on land, sea and in the air"



VE DAY: From Moscow to Paris, from New York to London, May 8 is declared Victory-in-Europe Day

The Red Flag is raised over the Reichstag building by Soviet Army Sergeants Yegorov and Kontary, signalling the end of the battle for Berlin. The Third Reich lies in ruins