

KEY PLAYERS

Adolf Hitler
Nazi leader



Joseph Stalin
Soviet Premier

Winston Churchill
British Prime Minister



The Fall of Nazi Germany

JANUARY 7, 1945 **Joseph Stalin** agrees to **Winston Churchill's** call for a Soviet offensive to ease pressure on the Allies' drive towards Germany from the west. Five days later, 160 Red Army divisions strike German forces in Poland and East Prussia, setting the stage for the Third Reich's downfall



Height of Nazi domination 1941-42

- Greater Germany of Third Reich
- Occupied by Third Reich
- Axis powers / Puppet states
- Allies

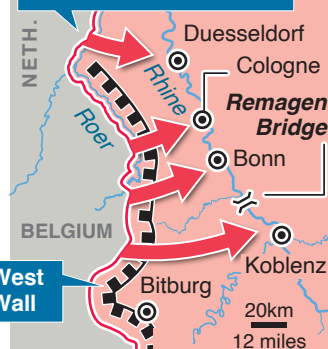
JANUARY

- Jan 14-16, Poland:** Soviet forces cut railway line at Kraków. Red Army encircles Warsaw
- Jan 16, Berlin:** Hitler returns to Reichstag, 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 set up
- Jan 27, Berlin:** With Red Army closing in, streets are cleared of refugees to make way for reinforcements
- Jan 27, Auschwitz:** Russian troops enter Nazis' biggest death camp, where 1.5 million people – including 1.1m Jews – were murdered from 1942-45 in Hitler's *Final Solution*

FEBRUARY

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

Allied front line: Feb 8



- Feb 8-10:** Britain's Royal Air Force (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

- Feb 19:** **Heinrich Himmler**, SS chief and second in Nazi command, 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 Armored Division cross Roer and advance 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**

Red Flag raised over Reichstag by Soviet troops, signalling end of **Battle for Berlin**. Third Reich lies in ruins



APRIL

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

- Apr 12:** U.S. President **Franklin D. Roosevelt** dies. Vice president **Harry S. Truman** sworn into office



- Apr 16:** Allied armies halt advance on Berlin to allow Soviets to take city. Over 2.5 million Russian troops, supported by over 6,000 tanks and 7,500 aircraft, begin final drive towards Berlin. Hitler retreats to his bunker

Allied front line: Apr 8 Soviet front line: Apr 18



- 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** (left), executed by partisans

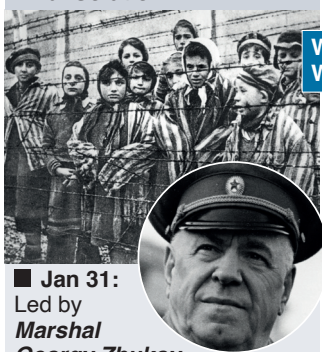
- Apr 30:** Hitler and his wife of 36 hours, **Eva Braun**, commit suicide. Their bodies are doused in petrol and burnt

- May 1-2:** Berlin falls to Red Army. Zhukov accepts German surrender in Berlin. War in Italy finally ends with surrender of nearly 500,000 German troops

- May 4:** Britain's **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:
May 8 declared
Victory in
Europe
Day



- Jan 31:** Led by **Marshal Georgy Zhukov**, Red Army crosses German border into Pomerania – 150km from Berlin, cutting vital Nazi rail link with Danzig

