

The Liberation of Paris (also known as the Battle for Paris and Belgium ; French: Lib ration de Paris) was a military battle that took place during World War II from 19 August until the German garrison surrendered the French capital on 25 August

Living with the Liberators Book: War and Liberation in France: University of Waterloo Citation: Living with the Liberators, review no. In fact, as Hilary Footitt has so ably demonstrated in War and Liberation in France, that version of the story of the transition is misleading and the smoothness of it was by no means a sure thing. Even as the Americans landed in Normandy, it was not certain exactly what the post-war administration would look like, or whether it would even necessarily be French, let alone led by Charles de Gaulle. Those weeks and months following the Normandy landings, as the Germans were pushed back into their own country, were marked by considerable administrative confusion and improvisation at the local level, with important implications for both the local French population and the Americans. Complicating the story was the presence of the Allied forces, who effectively, if temporarily, acted as another occupation force, while they drove back the German forces. It is well known that there was little love lost between President Roosevelt of the United States and Charles de Gaulle, leader of the Free French Forces and head of the external French resistance. Each deeply distrusted the other. However, it is less well known the depths to which their enmity shaped the plans for the post-Liberation period in France. Roosevelt had always insisted that, having recognised the Vichy regime as the legitimate French government, he could hardly offer recognition to any other claimant until after France was liberated and the French had been able to express freely their own opinion about who they wished to govern them. Indeed, Roosevelt stubbornly refused even to decide on what the nature of the future administration would be or when the liberators would transfer control to an independent French government until after France was liberated. This ran counter to the advice of many who surrounded him, as well as the advice of Winston Churchill, all of whom were convinced that de Gaulle was the only viable alternative. Thus, when the Americans arrived in France in June , they did so without any kind of direction or model for post-liberation administration. Instead, the forces in the field were instructed to improvise – pragmatism and empiricism ruled. The result was a very diverse Liberation experience, Footitt argues, shaped by the nature of the immediate circumstances of the specific military situation, the balance of fighting forces and the needs of the Allied forces. In Normandy, the Americans, once they had landed and pushed the Germans back, moved through the region swiftly. Their chief impact on that region was the extensive physical devastation resulting from heavy fighting. But the Allied presence was actually very fleeting, as the troops quickly pushed through. Footitt describes the interaction between the American forces and the locals as distant and unequal – the French taking a rather passive role in their liberation; the Americans sympathetic, but also frustrated with the French who just seemed to create logistical problems for troops keen to move on. Cherbourg, a key port on the English Channel, destined to be a major entry point for American supplies and troops, experienced liberation very differently. After a fierce battle, which reduced much of the city to ruins, the Americans took control, with the primary objective of restoring the port and facilitating the easy movement of supplies and troops off their ships and to the front lines. Thus, rather than moving on, the Americans settled in for the foreseeable future. For the Cherbourgeois, this meant that their city, while liberated from the Germans, had been re-occupied – this time by the Americans. Instead, they found themselves under a foreign occupation again, subject to the needs of the American forces for housing, office space, power and fuel, food, a functioning harbour and a clear run to the front lines. Inevitably, the tensions between the local population and the Americans mounted. The story was somewhat similar in Marseille, except that the Americans arrived to discover that much of the work of liberation had already been accomplished by the local Resistance, and that an effective and articulate left-wing French administration, Resistance-based, had already been put in place. Initially, this worked well, and the Americans and the French administration cooperated effectively. Although initially good, relations soon became strained, as they had in Cherbourg. In this case, however, the French administration was able to protest more effectively than in

Cherbourg, where the local administration was much weaker. It was a vain hope as, instead, Paris stabilised relations with Franco and the border with Spain. The final case study, Reims, was an extreme example of what happened in Cherbourg and in Marseille. So the department and the city became the epicentre for the concentration of an enormous number of Allied, mostly American, troops and equipment. It remained so even after the war had ended, used as a staging area for the re-deployment of troops. Friction between troops and the local population was soon manifested in a growing number of physical clashes. By mid, the hostility on both sides was thick, and the tensions became increasingly politicised. In each case, Footitt argues, local circumstances shaped the relationship between liberated and liberators, which is quite true. However, Footitt also tacitly acknowledges that there were certain common elements to the story of the French-Allied relationship at the time of Liberation which, when put in the various local contexts, resulted in different experiences. This is not a contradiction. Perhaps a more effective way of explaining it might be that there was a set of commonalities to the liberation experience across France which gave rise to different liberation experiences because of the way in which they interacted with local circumstances. It is an important, if nuanced, observation. First, the French found themselves in the awkward position of ostensibly playing host to guests the Americans they had been forced to invite into their home an analogy Footitt uses effectively. Yet, the dynamics were not those of the usual host-guest relationship, where the guest is dependent upon the host and the host is the dominant force in the relationship. Nothing required the Americans to concern themselves with French wants or needs other than a sense of moral obligation. The French found themselves in a rather ambivalent position: No matter what corner of France they came from, the French expected that Liberation would mean an opportunity to re-establish their national identity, affirm their national sovereignty and reconstruct a viable nation-state, beginning with their own locales. The Americans, on the other hand, had very different objectives which clashed with those of the French in at least some parts of the country. For the Americans, the focus was on the war with and in Germany. France quickly became a mere staging-post, a means to an end, rather than the end result. The Americans sought to secure territory, and then to occupy enough of that territory to ensure the successful prosecution of the war, and then they intended to move on. There was no interest in being involved in the cultural or social reconstruction of France, only in the physical reconstruction necessary to support the war effort. Those parts of France that were not essential to military progress were ignored by the Americans, resulting in a Liberation experience in which the Americans played only a fleeting role. In territory essential to the war effort, the Americans established a massive, dominating presence which distorted, and sometimes crushed, French efforts to rebuild according to French needs. The common theme, then, to these case studies is the clash of two cultures, two solitudes – French and American. In those parts of the country where the two did not meet and they really did not in Normandy, there was no opportunity for the differences to manifest themselves. Instead, the French retreated into bitter disillusionment, and the Americans into baffled frustration and impatience with French ingratitude. In each case, the one dismissed the other as an ignorant foreigner who did not appreciate what the other had to offer. If we are talking about a clash of cultures, surely the fact that there were British and Canadian forces involved in the liberation of France is a factor that should be taken into account. It would be interesting to know if the Liberation experience differed according to the nationality of the liberating force, as well. As such, War and Liberation in France has made an important contribution to our understanding of this period in French history.

About The Liberation of France. Due to its potent mix of triumph and controversy, the Liberation of France from Nazi Occupation continues to reverberate in the post-war politics and culture of France.

Charles de Gaulle was an armoured division commander and a minister in the Reynaud government during the Battle of France. During the six-week Battle of France , German armoured units attacked in a surprise thrust through the Ardennes and surrounded Allied units that had advanced into Belgium. Between 27 May and 4 June, around , British soldiers and , French troops were evacuated from the beaches to safety in England. Prime Minister Paul Reynaud sent him as an emissary to London to help negotiate a proposed union between France and Britain , but after this plan collapsed, Reynaud resigned on 16 June. This could be a dangerous activity. She is not alone! She has a great empire behind her! Together with the British Empire , she can form a bloc that controls the seas and continue the struggle. She may, like England, draw upon the limitless industrial resources of the United States". Armistice[edit] On the 19 of June, de Gaulle again broadcast to the French nation saying that in France, "all forms of authority had disappeared" and since its government had "fallen under the bondage of the enemy and all our institutions have ceased to function", that it was "the clear duty" of all French servicemen to fight on. Jackson have argued, de Gaulle and his followers were revolutionaries, unlike the Dutch , Belgian , and other governments in exile in London. De Gaulle was tried in absentia in Vichy France and sentenced to death for treason. Frenchmen everywhere were forced to choose sides, and often deeply resented those who had made a different choice. The establishment elsewhere of another government, and all support for this other government, would clearly be rebellion". Already obsolete at the start of the war, she would remain in Martinique for the next four years, her aircraft rusting in the tropical climate. French nationals from the tropical African colonies formed a large part of the recruiting forces at the beginning, as did nationals from French Algeria following Operation Torch in Many combatants were drawn from the native populations of French colonies. In late September , most African soldiers were replaced by young recruits of the French Forces of the Interior to better deal with the cold weather. Bolstered by rapid recruitment from metropolitan France, the number of troops rose from around , in the summer of to 1 million by the end of the year and eventually 1. Mainly coming from Tahiti, there were volunteers in April In November , volunteers remained when they were repatriated and replaced with men of French Forces of the Interior to better deal with the cold weather. In August , they numbered men. The main common difference, before the period of August to November , was Armoured divisions and Armour and support elements within infantry divisions were constituted of mainly white French soldiers and Infantry elements of Infantry divisions were mainly made up of Colonial soldiers. The 1st Free French Division also contained a mixed brigade of French Troupes de marine and the pacific island volunteers. The Division also included the Foreign Legion Brigades. The 3rd Armoured Division was also created in May but saw no combat in the war. This included 39, French from metropolitan France and colonial settlers , 30, Colonial soldiers mostly from Black Africa and 3, foreigners. The argent rhomboid field is defaced with a gules Lorraine cross, the emblem of the Free French. This to recall, the perseverance of Joan of Arc , patron saint of France, whose symbol it had been, the province where she was born, and now partially annexed into Alsace-Lorraine by the Third Reich , and as a response to the symbol of national-socialism , the Nazi swastika. Modern ships that share the same name as ships of the FNFL such as the nuclear attack submarine Rubis and nuclear ballistic missile submarine Le Triomphant , are entitled to fly the Free French naval jack as a mark of honour. A monument on Lyle Hill in Greenock , in the shape of the Cross of Lorraine combined with an anchor, was raised by subscription as a memorial to the Free French naval vessels which sailed from the Firth of Clyde to take part in the Battle of the Atlantic. It has plaques commemorating the loss of the Flower-class corvettes Alyssa and Mimosa, and of the submarine Surcouf. He therefore insisted that French warships either join the Allies or else adopt neutrality in a British, French, or neutral port. Churchill was determined that French warships would not be in a position to support a German invasion of Britain, though he feared that a direct attack on the French Navy might cause the Vichy regime to actively ally itself with the Nazis. With 22 ships sunk 12 of them German men-of-war on

22 operational patrols, she achieved the highest kill number of the FNFL. It is impossible for us, your comrades up to now, to allow your fine ships to fall into the power of the German enemy. We are determined to fight on until the end, and if we win, as we think we shall, we shall never forget that France was our Ally, that our interests are the same as hers, and that our common enemy is Germany. Should we conquer we solemnly declare that we shall restore the greatness and territory of France. For this purpose we must make sure that the best ships of the French Navy are not used against us by the common foe. The reduced crews would be repatriated at the earliest moment. If either of these courses is adopted by you we will restore your ships to France at the conclusion of the war or pay full compensation if they are damaged meanwhile. If you refuse these fair offers, I must with profound regret, require you to sink your ships within 6 hours. Such actions discouraged many French soldiers from joining the Free French forces. In November , around 1, officers and men of the French Navy took advantage of the British offer of repatriation to France, and were transported home on a hospital ship traveling under the international Red Cross. This did not stop the Germans from torpedoing the ship, and men were drowned. In total[citation needed] during the war, around 50 major ships and a few dozen minor and auxiliary ships were part of the Free French navy. It also included half a dozen battalions of naval infantry and commandos, as well as naval aviation squadrons , one aboard HMS Indomitable and one squadron of anti-submarine Catalinas. The French merchant marine siding with the Allies counted over ships. The struggle for control of the French colonies[edit] The gradual loss of all Vichy territory to Free France and the Axis by

Chapter 3 : IN PICTURES: The liberation of Paris from the Nazis, August The Local

The Liberation of France An Introduction (1) With the 70th anniversary of the Liberation approaching, I have posted this essay, intended as part one of an introduction to the topic. It provides a basic overview of the event and the aims of the key players in

But among the cheering images there are also shocking ones. These show the fate of women accused of "collaboration horizontale". In Europe, the practice dated back to the dark ages, with the Visigoths. During the middle ages, this mark of shame, denuding a woman of what was supposed to be her most seductive feature, was commonly a punishment for adultery. After French troops occupied the Rhineland in 1918, German women who had relations with them later suffered the same fate. And during the second world war, the Nazi state issued orders that German women accused of sleeping with non-Aryans or foreign prisoners employed on farms should also be publicly punished in this way. Also during the Spanish civil war, Falangists had shaved the heads of women from republican families, treating them as if they were prostitutes. Those on the extreme right had convinced themselves that the left believed in free love. It may seem strange that head-shaving, essentially a rightwing phenomenon, should have become so widespread during the leftist liberation euphoria in France in 1944. But many of the tondeurs, the head-shavers, were not members of the resistance. Quite a few had been petty collaborators themselves, and sought to divert attention from their own lack of resistance credentials. Yet resistance groups could also be merciless towards women. In Brittany it is said that a third of those civilians killed in reprisals were women. And threats of head-shaving had been made in the resistance underground press since 1940. There was a strong element of vicarious eroticism among the tondeurs and their crowd, even though the punishment they were about to inflict symbolised the desexualisation of their victim. This "ugly carnival" became the pattern soon after D-day. Once a city, town or village had been liberated by the allies or the resistance, the shearers would get to work. In mid-June, on the market day following the capture of the town of Carentan, a dozen women were shorn publicly. In Cherbourg on 14 July, a truckload of young women, most of them teenagers, were driven through the streets. In Villedieu, one of the victims was a woman who had simply been a cleaner in the local German military headquarters. Many French people as well as allied troops were sickened by the treatment meted out to these women accused of collaboration horizontale with German soldiers. A large number of the victims were prostitutes who had simply plied their trade with Germans as well as Frenchmen, although in some areas it was accepted that their conduct was professional rather than political. Others were silly teenagers who had associated with German soldiers out of bravado or boredom. In a number of cases, female schoolteachers who, living alone, had German soldiers billeted on them, were falsely denounced for having been a "mattress for the boches". Women accused of having had an abortion were also assumed to have consorted with Germans. Many victims were young mothers, whose husbands were in German prisoner-of-war camps. During the war, they often had no means of support, and their only hope of obtaining food for themselves and their children was to accept a liaison with a German soldier. Jealousy masqueraded as moral outrage, because people envied the food and entertainment these women had received as a result of their conduct. When Arletty, the great actor and star of the film *Les Enfants du Paradis*, died in 1986, she received admiring obituaries that did not mention the rumour that she had her head shaved at the liberation. These obituaries even passed over her controversial love affair with a Luftwaffe officer. But letters to some newspapers revealed a lingering bitterness nearly 50 years later. After the humiliation of a public head-shaving, the tondues - the shorn women - were often paraded through the streets on the back of a lorry, occasionally to the sound of a drum as if it were a tumbril and France was reliving the revolution of 1793. Some were daubed with tar, some stripped half naked, some marked with swastikas in paint or lipstick. They were in tears, hanging their heads in shame. While disgusted by this cruelty, I reflected that we British had known no invasion or occupation for some years. So we were not the best judges. Also, women collaborators were forced to run the gauntlet and were really beaten. Women almost always were the first targets, because they offered the easiest and most vulnerable scapegoats, particularly for those men who had joined the resistance at the last moment. Altogether, at least 20,000 women are known to have had their heads

shaved. But the true figure may well be higher, considering that some estimates put the number of French children fathered by members of the Wehrmacht as high as 80, In Paris there were cases of prostitutes kicked to death for having accepted German soldiers as clients. And at the other end of the social scale, several women from the highest reaches of the aristocracy were sheared for consorting with German officers. But resistance leaders in Paris made a determined effort to stop all head-shaving. American troops who had never been abroad before tended to see France itself as an enemy country, despite the attempts of the military authorities to inform them of the true situation. Some officers gave orders to arrest or shoot any French civilians encountered in the immediate invasion areas. Certainly French men and women found with German weapons were shot on the spot before they had a chance to explain. The possibility that they might have been collecting these weapons for the resistance never occurred to the soldiers concerned. An extraordinary battlefield myth soon spread like wildfire. This maintained that young French women, the lovers of German soldiers, were fighting as snipers against the allies. These rumours were soon picked up by British and American war correspondents eager for sensational stories. But a number of incidents also found their way into official reports without any doubts expressed about their authenticity. For example a lieutenant with the American 1st Infantry Division reported that they had encountered "four women in German uniform as snipers in trees and five in the town. I only saw one closely enough to identify her as a woman. She wore the German uniform and looked like a French woman. British officers, however, later became increasingly sceptical of these "latrine rumours". Moral confusion, if not outright hypocrisy, existed on the allied side too. At his airfield near Bayeux, Colville found it ironic when General Montgomery ordered all brothels to be closed. Undeterred and unabashed, several of the deprived ladies presented themselves in a field adjoining our orchard. Lines of airmen, including, I regret to say, the worthy Roman Catholic French-Canadians, queued for their services, clutching such articles as tins of sardines for payment. The contrast with off-duty German troops, who had been forbidden even to smoke in the street, could hardly have been greater. The basically misogynistic reaction of head-shaving during the liberation of France was repeated in Belgium, Italy and Norway and, to a lesser extent, in the Netherlands. In France, another wave of head-shaving took place in the late spring of when forced labourers, prisoners of war and concentration camp victims returned from Germany. One could almost say that it was the equivalent of rape by the victor.

Chapter 4 : world war two - When was France fully liberated? - History Stack Exchange

Liberation of France. The liberation of continental France began on D-Day, 6 June , with the invasion of Normandy, the amphibious assault aimed at establishing a

Gerow , and sent a vanguard the colonne Dronne to Paris, with the message that the entire division would be there the following day. Upon entering the town hall square, the half-track "Ebro" fired the first rounds at a large group of German fusiliers and machine guns. Civilians went out to the street and sang "La Marseillaise". The leader of the 9th Company, Raymond Dronne, went to the command of the German general Dietrich von Choltitz to request the surrender. The 2nd Armored Division suffered 71 killed and wounded. Material losses included 35 tanks, six self-propelled guns, and vehicles, "a rather high ratio of losses for an armored division", according to historian Jacques Mordal. They requested that they be made prisoner only by the military and surrendered to Battalion Chief Jacques Massu of the 2e DB. Choltitz was kept prisoner until April In his memoir Brennt Paris? According to an interview, which his son Timo gave to the French public channel France 2 , Choltitz disobeyed Hitler and personally allowed the Allies to take the city safely and rapidly, preventing the French Resistance from engaging in urban warfare that would have destroyed parts of the city. In an interview, he described Choltitz as a man who "for as long as he could, killed French people and, when he ceased to kill them, it was because he was not able to do so any longer". Kriegel-Valrimont argues "not only do we owe him nothing, but this a shameless falsification of History, to award him any merit. Why do you wish us to hide the emotion which seizes us all, men and women, who are here, at home, in Paris that stood up to liberate itself and that succeeded in doing this with its own hands? We will not hide this deep and sacred emotion. These are minutes which go beyond each of our poor lives. Liberated by itself, liberated by its people with the help of the French armies, with the support and the help of all France, of the France that fights, of the only France, of the real France, of the eternal France! Since the enemy which held Paris has capitulated into our hands, France returns to Paris, to her home. She returns bloody, but quite resolute. She returns there enlightened by the immense lesson, but more certain than ever of her duties and of her rights. I speak of her duties first, and I will sum them all up by saying that for now, it is a matter of the duties of war. The enemy is staggering, but he is not beaten yet. He remains on our soil. It will not even be enough that we have, with the help of our dear and admirable Allies, chased him from our home for us to consider ourselves satisfied after what has happened. We want to enter his territory as is fitting, as victors. This is why the French vanguard has entered Paris with guns blazing. This is why our brave and dear Forces of the interior will arm themselves with modern weapons. It is for this revenge, this vengeance and justice, that we will keep fighting until the final day, until the day of total and complete victory. This duty of war, all the men who are here and all those who hear us in France know that it demands national unity. We, who have lived the greatest hours of our History, we have nothing else to wish than to show ourselves, up to the end, worthy of France. Victory parades 26 and 29 August [edit] The U. On 29 August, the U. Joyous crowds greeted the Americans as the entire division, men and vehicles, marched through Paris "on its way to assigned attack positions northeast of the French capital. However, in , the City of Paris paid public homage to their participation with the placement of a plaque in their memory. Present were Javier Rojo , President of the Senate of Spain, and a delegation of Spanish politicians, who also later paid tribute to the Spanish survivors of the Liberation of Paris. War situation[edit] Although Paris was liberated, there was still heavy fighting elsewhere in France. Large portions of the country were still occupied after the successful Operation Dragoon in southern France, which extended into the south-western region of the Vosges Mountains from 15 August to 14 September Fighting went on in Alsace and Lorraine in eastern France during the last months of until the early months of

Chapter 5 : Paris liberated - HISTORY

The French 2nd Armored Division was formed in London in late with the express purpose of leading the liberation of Paris during the Allied invasion of France.

The landings at Normandy. Operation Dragoon, August The first notion of Operation Dragoon appeared in , during the Tehran Conference, when it was decided that the landings in Europe and opening of a second front were to be conducted in France. Initially the invasion of Southern France was dubbed Anvil, while the invasion of Normandy was codenamed Sledgehammer. The two were planned to be carried out at the same time. Operation Dragoon map In early , however, the plan of conducting two simultaneous landings in France was abandoned due to lack of resources. Instead, Operation Dragoon was postponed until August 15th when a large contingent of Free French Forces, together with Americans and Canadians, was to land in an area between the towns of Le Lavandou and Saint Raphael on the Mediterranean coast of France. German 88 mm gun on the coast in southern France. Before the massive landings took place, squads of American, Canadian and French commandos were assigned to neutralize various coastal batteries, thus enabling complete naval and air superiority for the invading task force. The real problem was the minefields left behind by the Germans as a means of slowing the Allied advance while retreating. Jean de Lattre de Tassigny walking through the liberated city of Marseille Nevertheless, fierce fighting continued as the German Forces found themselves in a tight spot, desperately trying to withdraw and regroup while being clinched by the advancing forces from both the south and north-west of France. However, a large number of French Resistance members, who were by this time re-organized as French Forces of the Interior, conducted a series of sabotages and diversions, all in favor of the Allied effort. Their actions caused additional difficulties for the German armed forces. Allied advance, August 15th to September 15th Politically, this was a very important step for the Allied command, as it was deemed critical that the French participated in their own liberation, thus strengthening the tie between the people and the government-in-exile headed by Charles De Gaulle. A German shell explodes near the U. Operation Dragoon was a success, despite the fact that a large contingent of veteran German troops managed to retreat successfully. France regained its lost military honor and continued the drive towards Berlin. Troops from across the country, as well as Soldiers from the Fort Myer Military Community, helped the veterans around the cemetery. The initial idea, which was abandoned at the Tehran Conference of , was to open a second front in Europe on the Balkan Peninsula. Read another story from us: His main areas of interest are history, particularly military history, literature and film.

Chapter 6 : The Liberation of France An Introduction (1) – FrenchHistoryOnline

Due to its potent mix of triumph and controversy, the Liberation of France from Nazi Occupation continues to reverberate in the post-war politics and culture of France. Presenting new research by leading specialists in the fields of history, literature and film studies, this stimulating volume is the very best in interdisciplinary scholarship.

Lorem About The Liberation of France Due to its potent mix of triumph and controversy, the Liberation of France from Nazi Occupation continues to reverberate in the post-war politics and culture of France. Presenting new research by leading specialists in the fields of history, literature and film studies, this stimulating volume is the very best in interdisciplinary scholarship and will define the subject for years to come. It situates the Liberation in the broadest possible context of image and event and incorporates subtle layers of ambiguity. Gender issues are given prominence and the challenging task of examining the ideas and reality of liberation for French people lends the book its originality and purpose. Table of contents Contents: Resistance Narratives - M. Unconventional Form, Conventional Image? Simmonds, Immigrant Fighters for the Liberation of France: Adler, No Words to Say It?: Women, Cinema and [the] Liberation - C. Women, Cinema and the Liberation - M. Gorrara, Reviewing Gender and the Resistance: The Case of Lucie Aubrac - C. Laurens, La Femme au Turban: Jean Paulhan and the Liberation - N. The Trial of Otto Abetz - N. The Liberation of Martinique - T. Evans, Algeria and the Liberation: Hope and Betrayal - P. Dine, The Inescapable Allusion: The Contested and Ambiguous Image - N. Hewitt, The Literature of the Right and the Liberation: Caen - Occupation and Liberation - N. Wood, Memory by Analogy: Hiroshima Mon Amour - W. The Intertextual Image - J. Flower, Reflections on Life, Death and History: Film, literature or gender studies as well as history and politics are well represented here. For information on how we process your data, read our Privacy Policy.

Chapter 7 : World War II: The Liberation of Paris | HistoryNet

The liberation of Paris, in theory, was only a matter of time after the success of D-Day in June. The taking of Paris and its liberation would have been a massive morale boost not to just those who lived in Paris but to French people in general, but it did not seem to be a high priority to Allied leaders.

Set up in London in June, it organised and supported the Resistance in occupied France. It ruled France until the end of the war and afterwards to, when the Fourth Republic was established, thus ending the series of interim regimes that had succeeded the Third Republic after its fall in 1940. From colonial outposts in Africa, India, and the Pacific, Free France steadily took over more and more Vichy possessions, until after the Allied landings in North Africa Operation Torch in November 1942, Vichy only ruled over the zone libre in southern France and a few possessions in the West Indies and nominally over Japanese-occupied French Indochina. By mid-1944, the forces of this army numbered more than 1 million, and they participated in the Normandy landings and the invasion of southern France, eventually leading the drive on Paris. Soon they were fighting in Alsace, the Alps and Brittany, and by the end of the war in Europe, they were 1.2 million, strong – the fourth-largest Allied army in Europe – and took part in the Allied advance through France and invasion of Germany. The Free French government re-established a provisional republic after the liberation, preparing the ground for the Fourth Republic in 1946. Definition Commemorative medal for voluntary service in Free France Historically, an individual became "Free French" by enlisting in the military units organised by the CFN or by employment by the civilian arm of the Committee. In many sources, Free French describes any French individual or unit that fought against Axis forces after the June armistice. Postwar, to settle disputes over the Free French heritage, the French government issued an official definition of the term. During the six-week Battle of France, German armoured units attacked in a surprise thrust through the Ardennes and surrounded Allied units that had advanced into Belgium. Between 27 May and 4 June, around 400,000 British soldiers and 100,000 French troops were evacuated from the beaches to safety in England. Prime Minister Paul Reynaud sent him as an emissary to London to help negotiate a proposed union between France and Britain, but after this plan collapsed, Reynaud resigned on 16 June. This could be a dangerous activity. She is not alone! She has a great empire behind her! Together with the British Empire, she can form a bloc that controls the seas and continue the struggle. She may, like England, draw upon the limitless industrial resources of the United States". Armistice On the 19 of June, de Gaulle again broadcast to the French nation saying that in France, "all forms of authority had disappeared" and since its government had "fallen under the bondage of the enemy and all our institutions have ceased to function", that it was "the clear duty" of all French servicemen to fight on. Jackson have argued, de Gaulle and his followers were revolutionaries, unlike the Dutch, Belgian, and other governments in exile in London. De Gaulle was tried in absentia in Vichy France and sentenced to death for treason. Frenchmen everywhere were forced to choose sides, and often deeply resented those who had made a different choice. The establishment elsewhere of another government, and all support for this other government, would clearly be rebellion". Already obsolete at the start of the war, she would remain in Martinique for the next four years, her aircraft rusting in the tropical climate. French nationals from the tropical African colonies formed a large part of the recruiting forces at the beginning, as did nationals from French Algeria following Operation Torch in 1942. Many combatants were drawn from the native populations of French colonies. In late September, most African soldiers were replaced by young recruits of the French Forces of the Interior to better deal with the cold weather. Bolstered by rapid recruitment from metropolitan France, the number of troops rose from around 100,000 in the summer of 1943 to 1 million by the end of the year and eventually 1.2 million. Mainly coming from Tahiti, there were volunteers in April 1943. In November, volunteers remained when they were repatriated and replaced with men of French Forces of the Interior to better deal with the cold weather. In August, they numbered 100,000 men. The main common difference, before the period of August to November, was Armoured divisions and Armour and support elements within infantry divisions were constituted of mainly white French soldiers and Infantry elements of Infantry divisions were mainly made up of Colonial soldiers. The 1st Free French Division also contained a mixed brigade of French Troupes de marine and the Pacific island volunteers. The

Division also included the Foreign Legion Brigades. The 3rd Armoured Division was also created in May but saw no combat in the war. This included 39, French from metropolitan France and colonial settlers , 30, Colonial soldiers mostly from Black Africa and 3, foreigners. The argent rhomboid field is defaced with a gules Lorraine cross, the emblem of the Free French. This to recall, the perseverance of Joan of Arc , patron saint of France, whose symbol it had been, the province where she was born, and now partially annexed into Alsace-Lorraine by the Third Reich , and as a response to the symbol of national-socialism , the Nazi swastika. Modern ships that share the same name as ships of the FNFL such as the nuclear attack submarine Rubis and nuclear ballistic missile submarine Le Triomphant , are entitled to fly the Free French naval jack as a mark of honour. A monument on Lyle Hill in Greenock , in the shape of the Cross of Lorraine combined with an anchor, was raised by subscription as a memorial to the Free French naval vessels which sailed from the Firth of Clyde to take part in the Battle of the Atlantic. It has plaques commemorating the loss of the Flower-class corvettes Alyssa and Mimosa, and of the submarine Surcouf. He therefore insisted that French warships either join the Allies or else adopt neutrality in a British, French, or neutral port. Churchill was determined that French warships would not be in a position to support a German invasion of Britain, though he feared that a direct attack on the French Navy might cause the Vichy regime to actively ally itself with the Nazis. With 22 ships sunk 12 of them German men-of-war on 22 operational patrols, she achieved the highest kill number of the FNFL. It is impossible for us, your comrades up to now, to allow your fine ships to fall into the power of the German enemy. We are determined to fight on until the end, and if we win, as we think we shall, we shall never forget that France was our Ally, that our interests are the same as hers, and that our common enemy is Germany. Should we conquer we solemnly declare that we shall restore the greatness and territory of France. For this purpose we must make sure that the best ships of the French Navy are not used against us by the common foe. The reduced crews would be repatriated at the earliest moment. If either of these courses is adopted by you we will restore your ships to France at the conclusion of the war or pay full compensation if they are damaged meanwhile. If you refuse these fair offers, I must with profound regret, require you to sink your ships within 6 hours. Such actions discouraged many French soldiers from joining the Free French forces. In November , around 1, officers and men of the French Navy took advantage of the British offer of repatriation to France, and were transported home on a hospital ship traveling under the international Red Cross. This did not stop the Germans from torpedoing the ship, and men were drowned. In total during the war, around 50 major ships and a few dozen minor and auxiliary ships were part of the Free French navy. It also included half a dozen battalions of naval infantry and commandos, as well as naval aviation squadrons , one aboard HMS Indomitable and one squadron of anti-submarine Catalinas. The French merchant marine siding with the Allies counted over ships. The struggle for control of the French colonies The gradual loss of all Vichy territory to Free France and the Axis by In September an Anglo French naval force fought the Battle of Dakar , also known as operation Menace, an unsuccessful attempt to capture the strategic port of Dakar in French West Africa. The local authorities were not impressed by the Allied show of strength, and had the better of the naval bombardment which followed, leading to a humiliating withdrawal by the Allied ships. On 27 October the Empire Defence Council was established to organise and administrate the imperial possessions under Free French rule, and as an alternative provisional French government. Its creation was announced by the Brazzaville Manifesto that day. La France libre was what de Gaulle claimed to represent, or rather, as he put it simply, "La France"; Vichy France was a "pseudo government", an illegal entity. French Indochina was invaded by Japan in September , although for most of the war the colony remained under nominal Vichy control. On 9 March , the Japanese launched a coup and took full control of Indochina. In February the Imperial Japanese Army invaded and occupied the leased territory. The action at Saint-Pierre and Miquelon created a serious diplomatic incident with the United States , despite this being the first French possession in the Americas to join the Allies,[51] which doctrinally objected to the use of military means by colonial powers in the western hemisphere and recognised Vichy as the official French government. De Gaulle had assured Churchill that the French units in Syria would rise to the call of Free France "but this was not the case. However, despite this success, the numbers of the FFF did not grow as much as has been wished for. Of nearly 38, Vichy French prisoners of war , just men volunteered to join the forces of General de Gaulle; the

remainder chose to be repatriated to France. Gradually the tide of war began to shift, and with it the perception that Hitler could at last be beaten. Support for Free France began to grow, though the Vichy French forces would continue to resist Allied armies " and the Free French " when attacked by them until the end of On 5 November , Annet, at last, surrendered. As in Syria, only a minority of the captured Vichy soldiers chose to join the Free French. Throughout in North Africa , British Empire forces fought a desperate land campaign against the Germans and Italians to prevent the loss of Egypt and the vital Suez canal. Here, fighting in the harsh Libyan desert, Free French soldiers distinguished themselves. British General Claude Auchinleck said on 12 June , of the battle: It is a new evidence that I have always been right! The French are, after us, the best soldiers! Even with its current birthrate, France will always be able to mobilise a hundred divisions! After this war, we will have to find allies able to contain a country which is capable of military exploits that astonish the world like they are doing right now in Bir-Hakeim! This was the first major success of an Allied army against the Axis powers, and marked a key turning point in the war. The Allies had hoped that Vichy forces would offer only token resistance to the Allies, but instead they fought hard, incurring heavy casualties. However, Darlan was released and U. Eisenhower finally accepted his self-nomination as high commissioner of North Africa and French West Africa , a move that enraged de Gaulle, who refused to recognise his status. Henri Giraud , a general who had escaped from military captivity in Germany in April , had negotiated with the Americans for leadership in the invasion. He arrived in Algiers on 10 November, and agreed to subordinate himself to Admiral Darlan as the commander of the French African army. Initially at least the effectiveness of these new recruits was hampered by a scarcity of weaponry and, among some of the officer class, a lack of conviction in their new cause. In response, the Vichy Army of Africa joined the Allied side. On 28 December, after a prolonged blockade, the Vichy forces in French Somaliland were ousted. After these successes, Guadeloupe and Martinique in the West Indies "as well as French Guiana on the northern coast of South America " finally joined Free France in the first months of In November , the French forces received enough military equipment through Lend-Lease to re-equip eight divisions and allow the return of borrowed British equipment. Churchill and Roosevelt in the background. He ordered them to cease resisting and cooperate with the Allies, which they did. This occurred through a series of consultations between Giraud and de Gaulle. The latter wanted to pursue a political position in France and agreed to have Giraud as commander in chief, as the more qualified military person of the two. The Cremieux decree , which granted French citizenship to Jews in Algeria and which had been repealed by Vichy, was immediately restored by General de Gaulle. Democratic rule was restored in French Algeria, and the Communists and Jews liberated from the concentration camps. The Allies discussed their general strategy for the war, and recognised joint leadership of North Africa by Giraud and de Gaulle. The CFLN set up a temporary French government in Algiers, raised more troops and re-organised, re-trained and re-equipped the Free French military, in cooperation with Allied forces in preparation of future operations against Italy and the German Atlantic wall.

Chapter 8 : The Liberation of Paris - History Learning Site

The liberation of Paris was the most romantic event of World War II. It was not necessarily the most dramatic or the most important. The D-Day invasion and the atomic bombing of Japan were surely more dramatic, while the defeat of France in and the cross-Channel evacuation from Dunkirk were certainly more important developments from a.

It was not necessarily the most dramatic or the most important. The D-Day invasion and the atomic bombing of Japan were surely more dramatic, while the defeat of France in and the cross-Channel evacuation from Dunkirk were certainly more important developments from a strategic standpoint. But for sheer romance, joy, delight, tears of happiness and emotional dizziness, the liberation of Paris surpassed all the other momentous events of the war. It was a moment of supreme elation. Painters made Paris the center of the art world. The accordion was the typical musical instrument of the bal musette, a slow dance in which men wore berets and held dead cigarette butts in the corners of their mouths. For sheer beauty, Paris was unrivaled. All this was lost in June when the Germans occupied Paris. They were there for more than four years. Their presence was distasteful. Their signs to offices and headquarters were everywhere. Their restraints, like the curfew, plagued the population. They took hostages and forbade playing jazz. Paris, it seemed, no longer belonged to the Parisians. And then the Allies arrived. In August, when the Americans finally broke out of the Norman hedgerows and were on the move, many inhabitants who had left the capital hurried back to the city. The Americans had been bogged down far from Paris for far too long—ages, it seemed. Now they were on their way and the Parisians hastened to return. They did not want to miss the gladness of welcoming their liberators and the glorious spectacle of seeing the Germans go. Many legends have arisen to explain how the liberation happened. Sam Marshall was the chief historian of the European theater and my boss during the war. I respected him a great deal, but, as everyone used to say, Sam never let a fact stand in the way of a good story. Actually, the liberation was somewhat more complicated. It all started long before the invasion of Normandy. In , the Allies listed a French division among the units earmarked to travel from England to the Continent. According to Allied planners, the reason was primarily so that there would be a major French formation present at the reoccupation of Paris. The 2nd French Armored Division was selected for the task. Eisenhower, as supreme Allied commander, promised to use the division to liberate the capital. The division commander was Maj. Leclerc had served as a Regular army captain during the campaign. Leclerc burned with desire to erase the shame of the French defeat. He was headstrong and impatient. He possessed a formidable will and generated an immense charisma. De Gaulle sent Leclerc to Chad, where he raised and trained a column of mobile troops. He took his men through the interior of Africa to Libya, and at Koufra attacked and defeated the Italians. He then attached his outfit to Lt. In the process, Leclerc advanced rapidly in rank and gained a legendary reputation. Having functioned in Africa more or less independently, he was ill-suited to the discipline of the chain of command. Leclerc pulled the division together from a variety of sources. Binding them together were hatred of the Germans, love of France and the spirit of Leclerc, who imparted a sense of adventure to men who exhibited the exuberance of freebooters. After training in Algeria, the division moved to England. The troops knew that their mission was to cross the Channel and liberate Paris. They could hardly wait. Anticipation of the impending ecstasy, however, made the division difficult to control. It was to be part of Lt. Patton needed units, and he called Leclerc in for a talk. Patton offered Leclerc the opportunity to go into battle immediately instead of waiting to liberate Paris. According to Patton, the Germans were about to surrender. If Leclerc wanted to fight, he had better get started. Leclerc jumped at the chance. Patton put Leclerc and his division into the XV Corps. Its commander was Maj. Wade Hampton Haislip, a well-heeled Virginian who had been a student at the Ecole de Guerre, the war college in Paris. Patton and Haislip, who also spoke French fluently, were especially welcoming to Leclerc. They tried to make him feel at home. Leclerc was skeptical of Americans. His service with the British in North Africa had given him something of an anti-American bias. Like many of his British associates, Leclerc considered the Americans newcomers to the war, green, untried and not very savvy. Leclerc believed that solutions to battlefield problems came to him in an instant, whereas Americans required time and paperwork to grasp military situations. If the Americans

committed stupidities, he claimed, the French ought to avoid doing the same. The French were the proprietors of France, but the Americans were running the show. Army commander; and Leonard Gerow, the V Corps commander. The 2nd French Armored Division traveled to Le Mans and took its place on the southern jaw of the Allied advance, moving north to close what became known as the Argentan-Falaise pocket, the maneuver to surround the Germans in Normandy. The French on the left and an American armored division, the 5th, on the right continued together toward Argentan. Ahead of them was an upland forest. Haislip instructed them to avoid this difficult terrain. Instead, the French were to go around the left side of the town, the Americans around the right. Instead of continuing on his assigned route, the impetuous French commander sent his vehicles around the left side, through the middle, and around the right of the town. Those Frenchmen traveling on the right used a road Haislip had reserved for the Americans. During this time, they blocked the American armored division and prevented it from hurrying to Argentan. Amid the ensuing confusion, three panzer divisions arrived in Argentan to defend the town. They kept the Allies out. Leclerc and his men then found themselves stuck on the outskirts of Argentan, maintaining the southern jaw of the Falaise pocket. Paris was a hundred miles away. Leclerc asked Patton when the French could go to Paris. Patton bluntly told Leclerc to remain where he was. On August 15, Patton recorded in his diary: He said, among other things, that if he were not allowed to advance on Paris, he would resign. I told him in my best French that he was a baby and said I had left him in the most dangerous place on the front. Argentan, he said, was quiet. It was probably time for him to assemble his troops for movement to Paris. Both Bradley and Patton assured Leclerc that he would have the honor of liberating Paris when the time came. These promises did not reassure Leclerc. American troops were closer to Paris than he was. Major General Walton H. If Eisenhower had to liberate Paris quickly, one of these forces would be able to reach the city much sooner than Leclerc. Hodges invited Leclerc to lunch on August All the Frenchman could talk about was Paris. Hodges was disgusted with him. Yet he noted in his diary that he would send Leclerc to liberate the capital. On August 21, when British troops swept into Argentan and took over from V Corps, Gerow moved his units into assembly areas for rest. Leclerc decided to act. That evening he sent about men in 10 light tanks, 10 armored cars and 10 personnel carriers toward the capital. This small contingent was to reconnoiter the routes to Paris. Leclerc wrote to de Gaulle that evening. On August 22, Leclerc sent an officer to explain to Gerow the rationale for what he had done. Unwilling to do so, Leclerc hastened to the First Army headquarters. There he learned that Bradley was conferring with Eisenhower on Paris. Leclerc decided to wait.

Chapter 9 : Operation Dragoon - the Liberation of Southern France, Spearheaded by the Free French Arm

Liberation of Paris On this day in , French General Jacques Leclerc enters the free French capital triumphantly. Pockets of German intransigence remained, but Paris was free from German control.

Resistance groups in German-occupied countries across the continent burned with impatience. In many cases they wanted to take liberation through into revolution and settle accounts with those who had collaborated or profited. In some cases, especially in Poland, hope was overshadowed by foreboding at what a Soviet occupation would mean. In , at the time of the Soviet occupation of eastern Poland during the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, the NKVD secret police had tried to eliminate all potential opponents, including teachers, landowners, officers, lawyers and academics. Stalin broke off diplomatic relations. In Italy, the Anglo-American forces were blocked at Monte Cassino and in the Anzio bridgehead, but this convinced the Americans that they were right to concentrate on the preparations to invade northern France. Although Winston Churchill now fully supported the Normandy invasion, he tried in vain to oppose the American plan to mount a second invasion in the south of France, because that would mean taking forces from the Italian campaign. Churchill was set on the militarily impractical idea of continuing the advance up Italy and then striking north-eastwards through the Ljubljana gap to seize Vienna and pre-empt a Stalinist occupation of central Europe. The Americans, not yet suspicious of Stalin, viewed this idea as British politicking and wanted to have nothing to do with it. They intended to finish the war against Nazi Germany as quickly as possible with a drive across northern Europe so that all their efforts could be switched to finishing the war against Japan. In May , the western allies began to plan the postwar world with the governments in exile in London. The first stage of the liberation of western Europe was to be fought in the skies, because the allies needed to establish air supremacy. The strategic bombing campaign against German cities, aircraft factories and refineries in fact served a dual military purpose, whatever the moral debate later. It had greatly helped the Soviet Union by forcing the Germans to withdraw the bulk of their fighter squadrons from the eastern front to defend the Reich. This gave the Soviets air superiority and prevented the Germans from carrying out air reconnaissance, thus enabling the Red Army to mount huge surprise attacks. But the bombing campaign also forced the German fighters into the air, where they could be taken on by the new long-range Mustangs escorting the Flying Fortress squadrons. By the early summer of , the Luftwaffe was reduced to a skeleton. The allies also needed to isolate the invasion region to hinder German supplies and reinforcements sent to the Normandy front. A plan known as "Transportation" involved bombing bridges, railway lines and marshalling yards. Churchill was horrified by the scale of French civilian losses, which he wanted limited to 10,, but he was overruled by Roosevelt, who insisted that Eisenhower, the supreme commander, be given a free hand to reduce allied casualties later. In fact close to 15, were killed, and another 20, French civilians died during the campaign. Nearly 70, French were killed by allied bombing and shelling during the whole war, more than the total number of British non-combatants killed by the Luftwaffe and the flying bombs. In fact, the break in the weather that allowed the invasion to go ahead was critical. The German navy never put to sea on the night of 5 June, and despite the legend of "bloody Omaha", allied casualties were far lower than the 10, expected. With around 3, servicemen dead, the figure was no more than the number of French civilians killed that day. War of attrition But once German panzer divisions arrived, the British and American armies found themselves bogged down in a terrible war of attrition. The savagery of the fighting meant that the German casualty rates alone were double the average on the eastern front. General Montgomery was forced to make a virtue out of a very sore necessity. With his British and Canadian forces facing the bulk of the SS panzer divisions, all he could hope to do was to tie them down until the Americans were able to break through in late July, launching Operation Cobra. Normandy was devastated by the fighting, but its martyrdom saved the rest of France from serious damage. De Gaulle had feared disorder not far short of civil war if communist groups tried to seize power. At the same time, Stalin did not want the Americans provoked by insurrectionary disorders in France behind their frontlines, in case they blamed the Soviet Union and cut off lend-lease supplies in retaliation. Jacques Duclos, the Comintern veteran, accordingly reined in the French Communist party. Stalin also felt that

in exchange for his discouragement of revolution in France, the western allies should allow him a free hand in Poland. Roosevelt distrusted him and American commanders suspected that the French were more interested in their own politics than in carrying on the war against Nazi Germany. They were also sickened by the readiness of many French to denounce neighbours and rivals as collaborators and by the head-shaving of Frenchwomen accused of collaboration horizontale with German occupiers. The French, for their part, did not appreciate the naive arrogance displayed by many American soldiers and their evident belief that almost any woman could be bought. Mutual suspicions and resentments from this time were to sully Franco-American relations for far longer than anyone could have imagined at the time. Hitler was taken completely by surprise. Tricked by a Soviet deception plan, he had switched forces to the south. Ten days later, Soviet forces entered Minsk, then, on 13 July, they took the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius. That same day, Marshal Konev launched an attack from the Ukraine towards the southern Polish city of Lvov. And on 21 July, the Soviet Union announced the formation of a Polish committee of national liberation. The Polish government-in-exile in London denounced this as the first step towards imposing a puppet administration under Soviet control. They hoped to seize the city as a base for the government-in-exile and thus pre-empt the imposition of a Soviet dictatorship. The Polish resistance was encouraged to rise against the Germans by broadcasts from Moscow, but it soon became clear that Stalin wanted the Home Army to be destroyed. Already in the areas of Poland occupied by the Red Army, the NKVD and Smersh were arresting non-communists as "saboteurs" or "counter-revolutionaries". Stalin, despite the appeals of Churchill and Roosevelt, also refused to allow airfields behind the Soviet front to be used by allied aircraft from Italy trying to drop supplies to the insurgents. Although without hope, the remnants of the Polish Home Army fought on with bitter bravery from the sewers and ruins of Warsaw. They finally surrendered on 2 October. Stalin had let the Germans do his dirty work for him. Euphoria in the west In September, following the liberation of Paris, a mood of heady euphoria infected almost everyone in the west, with the idea that the war would be over by Christmas. The Romanians had surrendered. The Finns had sought an armistice with the Soviet Union. On 17 September, Montgomery, with uncharacteristic rashness, ordered paratroop drops on the bridges over the Maas, the Waal and the lower Rhine at Arnhem. The British XXX Corps would charge up the road to relieve them, but constant delays meant that they never got through. Also, British commanders discounted intelligence reports that two SS panzer divisions had recently moved to the area. Operation Market Garden, as it was called, collapsed after 10 days. All the exaggerated optimism earlier in the month evaporated. It was to be a hard winter for the allied troops along the German frontier and in Italy. After the Canadians and British had cleared the northern side of the estuary leading to Antwerp, the allies prepared to start using the port. Hitler decided to launch a major counterattack from the Ardennes forests with the aim of recapturing the city. In a typically reckless gamble, he saw this as his best chance of knocking the western allies out of the war. On 16 December, two panzer armies suddenly struck through the snow-covered pine forests, taking the weak American infantry divisions by surprise. Panic and chaos ensued. Allied aircraft were unable to take off in the freezing fog. As the Germans surrounded the key town of Bastogne, General Patton started to move his Third Army north with impressive speed. It was also a hard winter for the German population, which up to then had lived off the food supplies seized from occupied countries. Berliners, with their black humour, joked at Christmas: The Japanese also had little hope. In late October, they had tried to ambush the US Third and Fifth Fleets off the Philippines, but were decisively outfought in the battle of Leyte, which involved no less than warships. The Americans succeeded in sinking the last four Japanese aircraft carriers, and effectively ended the power of the Imperial Japanese navy. Meanwhile, American bombers had begun to attack Japanese cities. Their Asian empire was crumbling. The Americans were fighting hard to evict the remaining Japanese troops from the Philippines while the British 14th Army advanced down into Burma. On 12 January, the great Soviet winter offensive began against East Prussia and along the line of the Vistula. Warsaw was taken and Soviet tank armies charged forward in a headlong advance all the way to the river Oder, just 60 miles from Berlin. Nazi gauleiters refused to allow German civilians to flee, in many cases until it was too late. Others were evacuated in cattle trucks or on ships organised by the German navy from Baltic ports. More than 7,000 were drowned when the liner Wilhelm Gustloff was torpedoed by a Soviet submarine. During this massive migration, some half a million

civilians are said to have died, and the fate of those women and girls caught by the Red Army was appalling, especially those trapped in East Prussia. Even greater suffering was endured by concentration camp inmates, forced in inadequate clothing and without food on to death marches back towards Germany. Any who collapsed from the cold, exhaustion or starvation were shot on the spot by their SS guards. They stared in disbelief at the skeletal figures, barely alive. Fall of Budapest While Marshal Zhukov regrouped his forces on the Oder during February and Marshal Rokossovsky started to clear Pomerania, the Hungarian capital of Budapest finally fell to Soviet forces after a bloody siege. Although the Yalta conference early in February had ended in optimism, Churchill was soon horrified to hear of the repression carried out against non-communists. At Yalta it had been agreed that representatives of the Polish government-in-exile should have talks with the Soviet-backed Lublin administration, but they were arrested and imprisoned by the NKVD despite their safe-conduct passes. Protests to Stalin produced angrily dismissive responses. Roosevelt, already very ill at Yalta, was interested only in forming the United Nations organisation to guarantee a postwar peace. He had barely a month to live. Churchill was increasingly preoccupied by the Soviet domination of central Europe. In October , in an attempt to preserve Greece, he had made the so-called "percentage agreement", tacitly conceding to Stalin most of the Balkans, but excluding Greece. Churchill had underestimated how much the Greek royal family was disliked, and a bitter civil war followed, but his tenacity at least saved Greece from becoming a Soviet satellite. At Yalta, the Soviet Union also agreed to join the war against Japan as soon as Germany was defeated. The United States and Britain, shaken by the suicidal defence of Pacific islands, feared that storming Japan would cost up to half a million allied casualties. At that stage, nobody knew whether the new atomic bomb would work. In the meantime, General Curtis LeMay stepped up his bombing attacks. On the night of 9 March, he sent his Superfortress squadrons on a fire-bombing raid against Tokyo. The mainly wooden houses blazed into an inferno.