

HOW THE ALLIES SHOULD HAVE DEFEATED GERMANY IN WORLD WAR II

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This is a really thorough answer from the military viewpoint, but it ignores the political factors. The entire Italy invasion would not have happened except for Winston Churchill. The most important thing to know about Churchill, other than his hatred of Hitler, was that he was a strongly committed imperialist.

In his younger days Churchill had fought in the Boer War, to preserve British power in South Africa. When World War II began he was most worried about German attacks, not only on Britain itself, but also on the British Empire. He gave top priority to fighting against Rommel's German campaign attacking British colonial interests in Egypt. He persuaded Roosevelt to commit American troops to attacking the Germans in North Africa. It was all about saving British interests in Egypt and control of the Suez Canal. All those American soldiers who died in North Africa were sacrificed in support of British imperialism.

Once the Germans retreated from North Africa, Sicily and then Italy became the next logical target. But the target was wrong. Stalin kept pressing Roosevelt to open a second front directly against Germany, so that Nazi forces could be crushed between two opposing armies converging from the east and the west. Stalin had a major advantage, in that Russians could advance across the open Polish plain directly toward Berlin. Britain and the U.S., in contrast, had to make a much more difficult landing by sea.

Instead of expending American lives to shore up the British empire, Roosevelt should have resisted Churchill's loony pressure to invade Italy. He should have stuck with his original strategy to make America "the arsenal of democracy," by concentrating on building planes, ships, tanks, ammunition, etc. Instead of invading Sicily and Italy, Roosevelt should have sent more American aid to Italian anti-fascist partisans, since they could do the work of overthrowing Mussolini more effectively than foreigners could. The term "arsenal of democracy" was not quite accurate, since the USSR was hardly a democracy. But Stalin led the main force, the Red Army, that was opposing Hitler. Roosevelt had no choice but to accept that reality.

America's main contribution to the Allied effort was supplying the Red Army. And Russia paid the price. Probably about 24 million Russians died as a result of the Nazi invasion. This is many times more than the number of Americans who died. If Roosevelt had stuck to his original role as supplier, there would have been many fewer American deaths.

There were two other options. One would be for the Allies to land in southern Denmark, which would put them much closer to Berlin than having to fight all the way across France, Belgium, Nederland, and into western Germany. How much more effective would that locale for a Western Front have been? The main difficulty of a Denmark landing is that Allied troops would have to be transported over a long trip by sea. Such ships would be easy targets for German submarines, ships, and aircraft. Such a plan would only be feasible if the Allies were first concentrating on gaining control of the North Sea, and having air superiority.

The second option would be not to initiate an invasion of Germany from the West, at all. Amphibious landings of armies are notoriously difficult. What would have been the result if the U.S. had concentrated only on building up the U.S. navy to relentlessly pound the German harbors, seaports, coast defenses and interior, in both the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, while a more advanced U.S. air force destroyed the Luftwaffe and did strategic bombing (not of German cities in general, but of specific targets like hydroelectric dams, railroad crossings, military production factories, etc)? No doubt that option would have saved American lives, while still accomplishing the defeat of the Nazis.

If, instead of opening a second front, the U.S. had provided even more arms and supplies to Russia, Stalin could have sent even more Russian troops to attack German forces. No doubt more Russians would have died, and the Red Army would have taken not only Berlin but pretty much all of Germany. That would have meant a larger and more permanent Russian influence over Germany. Stalin wanted to divide Germany into smaller nations that would not be strong enough to invade their neighbors still again. Stalin wanted to dismantle German factories and take them to the USSR, to replace all the industry that the Germans destroyed when they invaded Russia in 1941. Stalin wanted to take German prisoners of war and send them to become forced laborers in Soviet factories.

If Roosevelt had allowed Stalin these three crucial things, he likely would have been able to get Stalin to agree not to interfere in German internal politics once the new smaller German states had been established. Perhaps Roosevelt could have offered American troops to be the occupation force, which once again would have saved American lives.

“What If...” scenarios are always difficult to predict, but instead of wasting American lives in brutal invasions of North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France, Belgium, Nederland, and western Germany, perhaps a wiser strategy might be to build American strength in naval and air force attacks, while giving more supplies to the USSR for them to be the main army force conquering Germany. After the many atrocities that German forces inflicted on the people of Russia and eastern Europe, there would hardly be tears of sympathy if those troops had ended up in Russian labor camps.

In short, Roosevelt should have resisted Churchill and focused on naval and air superiority, while at the same time giving more U.S. aid to Stalin to let Russia be the armed force that destroyed fascism.

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