USA TODAY

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Endgame: Battle of Berlin ▮ Legacy of the American GIs ▮ Victory Through Artists' Eyes

The triumph over Germany defined America for decades.
Here are four ways the nation might be different had it never happened.

If there'd been no V in E ...

New Yorkers jam Times Square on May 7, 1945, to celebrate the news of Nazi Germany's surrender, which took effect the following day. World War II in Europe began in September 1939 with the German invasion of Poland. The United States entered the war in 1941 after it was attacked by Japan, a German ally. HARRY HARRIS/AP

Matt Alderton Special to USA TODAY

Although the outcome isn't always as sweet, history is a lot like baking: Even the smallest change to a recipe can produce dramatically different results. Sometimes, the outcome is a triumph. Others, a train wreck. But while you can always make another batch of cookies, in history there are no do-overs. Still, it can be interesting — enlightening, even — to imagine if there were.

Surrounded by officers and aides, American Gen. Dwight Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander in Europe, makes a V-for-victory sign with two of the pens used to sign Germany's unconditional surrender at Reims, France, on May 7, 1945. Adolf Hitler had committed suicide a week earlier as Soviet troops overran Berlin. AP

"This is what historians call *counterfactual history*," says historian Thomas Kühne, professor of history and director of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. "In the end, it is speculation. But in my view, counterfactual thinking is an interesting experiment that can help us learn from the past as we consider the options for our future."

Of all the consequential dates in modern history, one that's especially ripe for reimagining is May 8, 1945. V-E Day.

"The 'V-E' in V-E Day stands for 'Victory in Europe,' but really, it's about victory over Hitler," says Rob Citino, executive director of the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy and senior historian at The National World War II Museum in New Orleans.

"What would a world ruled by Adolf Hitler look like?" Citino asks. "It's a world beyond imagination."

If the war in Europe had ended in Germany's favor, Citino says, Hitler's war machine would have barreled on toward other nations — including, perhaps, the United States, whose postwar story may have had a very different plot.

Here, for example, are just four of the countless ways historians think postwar America might have looked different:

1. There might be more pandemics

The year 2020 will be remembered for the COVID-19 pandemic that swept the world. If V-E Day had never happened, it's conceivable that the modern world might have seen similar pandemics sooner and with greater frequency, suggests Michael Broache, an assistant professor of political science at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

According to Broache, a significant outcome of World War II was the establishment of the United Nations, a byproduct of American victory. Given current events, its absence in the international community would be

While guarding newly arrived German prisoners of war on a pier in New York City, Pfc. Clarence Ayers reads about the German surrender on May 8, 1945. JOHN ROONEY/AP

Britons dance in the street in London's Piccadilly Circus on V-E Day. Britain had been at war with Germany for over 5½ years. THE NATIONAL WWII MUSEUM

especially conspicuous in the realm of public health. That's because the United Nations maintains and supports numerous specialized agencies, including the World Health Organization, whose leadership has been pivotal in preventing and controlling previous global health crises — including smallpox, which it helped eradicate in 1979.

"The World Health Organization coordinates cross-border cooperation on broad public health issues. That's really important during a pandemic because viruses don't see borders," Broache says.

"COVID-19 is a transnational problem that requires transnational solutions. ... If World War II had a different outcome, there would be a very different set of institutions to turn to, if any."

2. Civil rights probably would have been quashed

If Germany had won the war, smallpox may not have been eradicated, but the American civil rights movement almost certainly would have been, according to Kühne, who says a victorious Hitler would likely have invaded the United States in the late 1940s or 1950s. "The Nazis no doubt would have continued their anti-Jewish genocide in the United States," he says. "But they also would have radicalized Jim Crow and returned to enslavement of African Americans."

Even if the Nazis did not invade and occupy the United States, the civil rights movement might have failed to launch.

"The civil rights movement was fundamentally about black mobilization, a lot of which came from black veterans who returned home thinking if they could defeat Nazism abroad, they could defeat segregation at home," says historian Donald Nieman, executive vice president for academic affairs, provost and professor of history at Binghamton University in Binghamton, New York.

"Absent the optimism that came out of World War II, I'm not sure the civil rights movement would have gotten the traction that it did," Nieman says.

WWII AMERICA COMES HOME

President Harry Truman (holding paper) discusses the German surrender at a White House press conference May 8, 1945. Truman had been president for a month. AP

3. The middle class would be smaller

World War II was as much an economic victory as a military one, Citino says. "We came out of World War II the richest country in the world," he says. "Our economy right now is taking a hit because of the coronavirus, but we're still what (Harvard economist John Kenneth Galbraith) called the 'Affluent Society.' We still enjoy a standard of living that would have been the envy of anyone on Earth 100 or even 50 years ago, and that affluence is the real legacy of World War II for the United States."

From American affluence sprang the American middle class. "After the American victory came a massive demobilization of the armed forces, a very significant decline in federal consumption and a dramatic increase in private investment," Nieman says. "Had we not defeated Nazi Germany, it's hard to imagine that kind of rapid demobilization and burst of investment, which led to the development of a consumer economy immediately after World War II."

4. American innovation might be missed

In Germany, World War II caused a "brain drain," according to Kühne, who says many scientists and scholars were lost to the Holocaust while still others fled to America. Had it lost the war, the United States might have experienced similar intellectual losses.

"The size of our military would have continued to be much larger than it was; the ability and willingness to pass the G.I. Bill probably wouldn't have been there; and there would not have been the same kind of optimism-fed belief by Americans that they could do better than their parents did," Nieman says. "With all of that, I think we would have seen dramatically fewer young people going to American colleges and universities."

Although it's difficult to draw a direct line from one to the other, it stands to reason that a host of achievements — from the moon landing to the internet — were born of a postwar investment in higher education.

Concludes Citino, "The sense of ingenuity and improvisation on which Americans have always prided themselves became wedded to education after the war, and we still benefit from that in all sorts of ways. If you think about things like the space program and the digital explosion, I don't think it's an accident that they took place in a country that spent a hell of a lot of money on higher education after World War II."

Celebrate victory virtually

Even with social distancing in effect, you can take part in V-E Day commemorations

USA TODAY

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended a lot of plans, including for 75th-anniversary celebrations of V-E Day on May 8. A few modified efforts will carry on, led by the Department of Defense, which is staging a one-hour broadcast to commemorate the day.

According to the Pentagon, the production "will celebrate America's resolve and the resolve of our World War II veterans by thanking them for the sacrifices they made to secure peace for our Nation and our allies around the globe. We hope as well that the example of our "Greatest Generation" highlighted in this program will uplift, inspire, and unite Americans everywhere as our Nation works to tackle the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic."

The Defense Department has been accepting short (15- to 30-second) video messages from celebrities and notable persons to be included in the broadcast.

The National WWII Museum in New Orleans will also be commemorating the anniversary digitally. The museum will push out oral history clips throughout the day on its social media channels recounting V-E Day from those who were there. It will also launch the first full episode of its podcast "To the Best of My Ability," a series that chronicles the final months of the war through the words of President Harry Truman, his Cabinet members and others who experienced it. The museum will also be interviewing a World War II veteran live, giving viewers the opportunity to ask questions.

For more information on museum efforts: *nationalww2museum.org.*

The National World War II Memorial has been commemorating each battle in the war for the past four years. Holly Rotondi, executive director of the Friends of the National World War II Memorial, said: "It has just been very important that we mark the 75th anniversary for the battle and for the end of the war because (of the war's) 16 million (servicemembers), less than 400,00 still living, which is really in our mind our last opportunity in a major way to say thank you, to recognize them."

For the 75th anniversary commemoration on May 8, the Friends group will be streaming live on its Facebook page a brief wreath presentation at the National World War II Memorial and later that day joining the Department of Defense in releasing a virtual commemoration featuring WWII veterans and members of the Friends' WWII 75th Anniversary Honorary Committee, among others.

"For us, giving them individual recognition, it's just so important because if not now, when?" Rotondi said. "For us it's also for the families to remind them, we haven't forgotten your loved ones, that they're still remembered, their sacrifices still valued and we will not forget them, and the service and sacrifices that they made for our country.

"It's really important as a nation that we do that."

Five years ago, on the 70th anniversary of V-E Day, a huge crowed turned out to watch vintage World War II aircraft fly over Washington. Much of this year's commemoration is being moved online because of COVID-19. JACK GRUBER/USA TODAY

WWII AMERICA COMES HOME

Darkness enveloped the world; GIs beat it back

Victory over Germany came at a nearly unfathomable cost — and the war still wasn't over

Keith Huxen
Special to USA TODAY

As the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day arrives, to understand the significance of the event and the reaction of the American service veterans in that moment, we today have to grasp what the Allied troops had fought against at the cost of unprecedented death and destruction right up until that moment.

After the United States entered World War II following Imperial Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the American public's rage was focused upon Japan. President Franklin Roosevelt, however, recognized that Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany was the militarily stronger, morally darker and more dangerous power.

At that moment, Hitler had conquered Europe from the Atlantic shores of France in the west to the gates of Moscow in the east, ravaging and plundering the continent of its industrial, agricultural, and even cultural resources for the Nazi war machine while killing millions of soldiers and civilians. The decision to murder Jews and other racially undesirable peoples in totality as an official "Final Solution" was only weeks away.

At the White House over Christmas, Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill confirmed their strategy: "Germany first." The war in Europe would receive a significant majority of the material resources that poured from American industry to arm an American military that swelled to over 12 million men and women at its peak, as well as supply our allies, chiefly Britain and the Soviet Union.

What followed Roosevelt's commitment to defeat Hitler first was more than three years of battlefield lessons and bloody fighting in the European theater. From waves of heavy bombers flying against terrible odds

Survivors of the concentration camp at Ohrdruf describe for U.S. Maj. John Scotti the atrocities committed there. In April 1945, Ohrdruf became the first concentration camp liberated by U.S. forces. BYRON ROLLINS/AP

Soldiers of the 9th Armored Division celebrate in Weiden, Germany, upon hearing that the Nazi regime had surrendered unconditionally. For many U.S. troops in Europe, the German surrender meant that they would finally be going home. For others, however, further combat awaited in the Pacific. WILLIAM C. ALLEN/AP

over occupied Europe to the invasion of North Africa, from the campaign for Sicily to the invasions at Salerno and Anzio and bloody slog up the Italian peninsula, from the pivotal D-Day landings at Normandy to being stymied in the Huertgen Forest, and through the Battle of the Bulge to finally cross over the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen, American troops clawed their way into the heartland of Nazi Germany.

As April approached in 1945, victory was drawing near. But Hitler's resolve to resist to the last — even sacrificing young boys and old men in combat — made each death even more poignant and bitter as the war reached its apex. A few specific events may provide us today with perspective on daily life then.

On March 30 near Paderborn, a German Tiger tank commander gunned down Maj. Gen. Maurice Rose as he attempted to drop his pistol to surrender. Two days before, Rose had told a reporter that after the war he planned to get to know his 4-year-old son. A young officer repeated, even as he was assured that Rose's body had been correctly identified, "It can't be him. I'm sure it ain't him . ... I sure hope it ain't him."

On April 12, Roosevelt, the commander in chief who had guided his nation within sight of victory, died at his home in Warm Springs, Georgia. One young infantry officer wrote of his personal reaction in his diary: "This is a shock. He has been president since I was 14."

On the same day back in Germany, Gens. Dwight Eisenhower, George Patton, and Omar Bradley toured Ohrdruf — the first Nazi concentration camp liberated by American troops. The physical and moral stench of excrement, burned human remains, congealed blood,

V-E Day was the day that light completely and triumphantly rolled back the darkness of the Third Reich, which Adolf Hitler had proclaimed would rule for a millennium, after only a dozen years. The price of light was purchased with the blood of hundreds of thousands of Americans. But in the words of one U.S. infantryman who saw nearly two years of combat in Europe, "I'd gladly go through it all again if I knew that things like this would be stopped." Their victory on the battlefield and moral witness to unspeakable depravity are the legacy of the GIs to remember on V-E Day.

thousands of corpses in shallow graves, and execution sites in the camp made Patton vomit.

"Still having trouble hating them?" Eisenhower queried one nervous young soldier. He told other troops there, "We are told that the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for. Now at least he will know what he is fighting against."

On April 3, Capt. Jack Golden of Texas wrote his family of the unceasing German resistance, "I think we should fire about a thousand rounds into every town. Do them all good . . . Enough. Enough." Twelve days later on April 15 upon a just-secured road in Amelunxen, Golden was shot and killed in his jeep by a surprise attack. Secretary of War Henry Stimson's condolence letter to Golden's parents contained the truthful but uncomforting line, "The loss of a loved one is beyond man's repairing."

The killing and dying continued, yet there was no German surrender. More Nazi horrors were exposed as further concentration camps were liberated, notably Bergen-Belsen by British troops the same day Captain Golden was killed. By April 14, the U.S. Army had crushed the remaining German forces in the west in the Ruhr campaign, and on April 16 the Red Army launched its attack on Berlin. On April 30, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker complex beneath Berlin, leaving Adm. Karl Dönitz in charge of the German government, and to face the reality of defeat when Berlin fell May 2.

The formal end of the war in Europe finally came at 2 a.m. on Monday, May 7, 1945, on the second floor of a red brick schoolhouse in Reims, France, that Eisenhower, the supreme Allied commander, was using for his headquarters. Eisenhower did not attend the signing of the German surrender documents, preferring instead to chain smoke in Olympian solitude in his office. Afterward, he icily informed German Gen. Alfred Jodl that he would be personally held accountable for any breaches of the peace. After Jodl left for his eventual fate with a hangman's noose at Nuremberg, champagne was opened. As draft announcements telling the common soldiers that their war was over increased in complexity, Eisenhower seized the reins one last time, dictating a simple message: "The mission of this Allied Force was fulfilled at 0241, local time, May 7th, 1945. Eisenhower." At 4:45 a.m. he called Bradley to inform him, "Brad, it's all over," and Bradley then marked the placement of 43 American divisions under his command on D+335 (335 days after D-Day) on his map board.

The word spread forward from there; but reactions were not what we today might think they were.

To be sure, there was elation. The 3rd Armored Division toasted Eisenhower with champagne that the men had "liberated" for this very moment. Gen. James Gavin wrote in his diary, "This is it. After two years. One doesn't know whether to cry or cheer or simply get drunk."

But in the moment there was also subdued reflection, for both the future and past.

For the future, the war was not yet fully over. On the day before the German surrender, the military newspaper Stars and Stripes had informed the troops about the points system that would determine who would go home; those who hadn't earned enough points could look forward to future combat in the Pacific. One young officer, Paul Fussell, later recalled how as a rifle platoon leader in the 45th Infantry Division in a staging area near Reims, the surrender site, he had endured wounds that after the war would qualify him as 40% disabled. But because he didn't have enough points, he was slated to be part of the upcoming invasion of Japan. He anticipated that he would likely die there.

Gen. Alfred Jodl, center, chief of staff of the German high command, signs the surrender at Reims, France, on May 7, 1945. He is flanked by his aide Maj. Wilhelm Oxenius, left, and General Admiral Hans-Georg von Friedeburg,head of the German navy. Jodl would be executed for war crimes in 1946. Von Friedeburg committed suicide less than three weeks after the surrender. Oxenius was imprisoned from 1945 to 1948. AP

For the past, the words of one soldier to his family are all too understandable: "I should be completely joyous on this occasion. ... I remember the many who marched with me, and who also loved life but lost it and cannot celebrate with us today."

Despite this incomplete victory in a world war, V-E Day still marked a real triumph over the most dangerous, aggressive and powerful tyranny in modern times. And while Asia remained under the dark shadows of Imperial Japan, in Europe the black nightmare of Nazism had been vanquished.

Sgt. Forrest Pogue, a professor of history before the war, had landed on Omaha Beach on June 7, 1944, and for 11 months afterward had not seen lights shining anywhere in Nazi-occupied territories. He was in Czechoslovakia, one of Hitler's first victims, when V-E Day ended the war in Europe. The biggest impact on him was the simplest thing: "The lights went on."

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Their victory on the battlefield and moral witness to unspeakable depravity are the legacy of the GIs to remember on V-E Day.

Keith Huxen is the Senior Director of Research and History at the Institute for the Study of War and Democracy at The National WWII Museum in New Orleans.

Berlin was the capital of an empire that Hitler predicted would last a thousand years. By the spring of 1945, it was all but destroyed and on the edge of surrender. AP

Berlin crushed in a final vise

With U.S. and British troops coming from the west and the Red Army in the east, Hitler remains defiant and ensures his capital's total destruction

Keith Huxen Special to USA TODAY

In all of World War II, no two combatants were filled with more mutual hatred, toxicity and unbridled violence or inflicted more mass death on each other than Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. For the leaders of the two nations, Adolf Hitler and Josef Stalin, what was at stake in their conflict was nothing less than the ultimate course of world history.

The final act in their struggle was the Battle of Berlin in 1945. It not only annihilated one of Europe's grandest and most beautiful capital cities, but also completed the destruction of Hitler's grandiose — and hellish — dream for the future of European civilization.

As the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day approaches, we today should understand what was permanently voided in our observances of that moment. But we should also reflect that the moment did not ultimately settle the war, and history flowed into different paths that lead to our present.

Rather than spare his people by surrendering, the German Fuhrer had composed their death sentence. What followed was two weeks of madness, depravity, suffering and death as the Red Army brutally fought its way into the city.

Despite having signed a non-aggression pact with Stalin in 1939, Hitler launched an invasion of the Soviet Union with 3.5 million troops in June 1941, an offensive code-named Operation Barbarossa. Hitler hoped to accomplish three major objectives. First, he would destroy the home of Marxist Communism, which Hitler associated with a global Jewish conspiracy. Second, Nazi Germany would gain *Lebensraum*, or "living space," in Eastern Europe for the future expansion of the German people. Lastly, a lightning strike and quick victory against the Soviet Union would rob Britain, still fighting Nazi Germany alone in summer 1941, of its only potential ally in Europe and force it into a negotiated peace, effectively ending the war before the United States might enter.

But unlike with Germany's victorious campaigns in the west, Hitler informed his generals that the war in the east would be a merciless race war. Sweeping ethnic cleansing of Jews and other peoples deemed racially undesirable by the Nazis would open lands for an entire new empire of racially pure Aryan Germans to settle. Hitler planned that the capital city of Berlin would be renamed Germania, and Nazi architects produced models of the massive state buildings, city streets and boulevards, stadiums, monuments, and statues of unparalleled scale that would decorate his envisioned German racial utopia for a thousand years to come.

Instead, at an unprecedented cost in human lives and suffering, the Soviets rallied to their Motherland.

When the Germans besieged and starved Leningrad beginning in fall 1941, the city held for 900 days, even as an estimated 1.3 million of its 3 million people died. Just as Napoleon had done in 1812, the Germans reached the outskirts of Moscow in 1941 — but just as Tsar Alexander I left Napoleon waiting in vain on Poklonnaya Hill, the Red Tsar Stalin refused to surrender.

Red Army soldiers fly the Soviet flag over the Reichstag in Berlin. Although World War II began with Germany and the Soviet Union pledging non-aggression toward each other, Hitler launched an invasion in 1941. Over 20 million people died as Germany waged a genocidal campaign on Russian soil. YEVGENY KHALDEI/ITAR-TASS VIA AP

With the Volga River literally at their backs at Stalingrad, the Soviets endured over a million casualties but destroyed an entire German army group and began the long road to Berlin. At Kursk and the Dnieper River in 1943, the Red Army suffered over 400,000 killed in each battle. All told, more than 8.6 million Red Army troops died in the war, along with an estimated 18 million civilians. For perspective, the United States lost approximately 416,000 dead in the entire war.

By April 1945, the noose was tightening on Berlin. The magnificent performance and rapid advance of the Allies in the Ruhr campaign brought Berlin potentially within reach of the Anglo-American armies. Despite pressure to allow British Gen. Bernard Montgomery to pierce through northern Germany and take Berlin, Allied commander Dwight Eisenhower was ever cognizant of his mission to destroy the German war machine and insisted on a broad front strategy aimed at the remaining German military assets in front of his lines. Wary of the Allied advance in the west and mindful that his nation had suffered the brunt of Hitler' aggression and desirous of Berlin as a glittering political prize, Stalin moved up a planned offensive by two weeks.

At 4 a.m. on April 16, 1945, the Red Army began the final act when 140 searchlights lit up the German defenders on the Küstrin bridgehead, followed by the roar and flashes of more than 20,000 guns and rockets. In the eastern parts of Berlin just over 30 miles away, the cacophony sounded like distant thunder.

Having retreated to his underground bunker complex beneath the Reich Chancellery, Hitler's issued an Order of the Day to his remaining defenders: "Soldiers of the Eastern Front. ... For the last time the deadly Jewish Bolshevist enemy is going over to the attack with his hordes. He is trying to smash Germany and exterminate our people. ... Whoever does not do his duty at this moment is a traitor to our people."

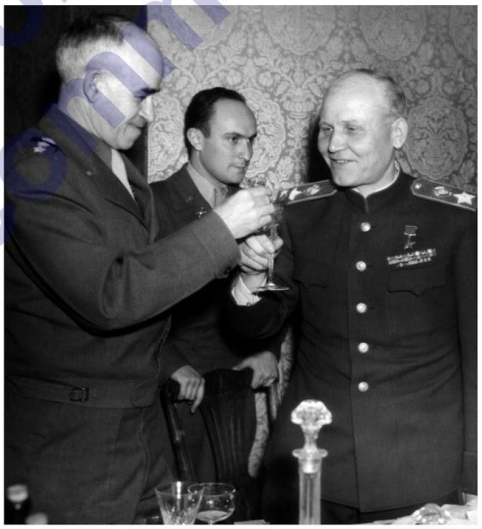
Rather than spare his people by surrendering, the German Fuhrer had composed their death sentence. What followed was two weeks of madness, depravity, suffering and death as the Red Army brutally fought its way into the city. Scenes included the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra being ordered to play its last performance by the regime and having Wagner's "Die Götterdämmerung," a tragic vision of the death of the gods, substituted at the last moment.

On his 56th birthday on April 20, Hitler came out of his bunker to the Chancellery garden and inspected a group of Hitler Youth with shaky hands before descending back into his underworld. Berliners hid from the incessant artillery shelling in bunkers. Once the pride of Berliners as a symbol of their efficient and cleanly modernity, the railway system became a bomb shelter and a nightmarish scene of with wounded bodies and human filth. When shells damaged the zoo, orders were given to shoot dangerous animals such as the lions and a baboon who twice pushed away the zookeeper's rifle.

From his bunker, Hitler ordered armies that had no troops into battle to cut off the Russian advance. When whispers spread that after looting food stores Soviet troops would torch the buildings, grocers began to give away food, but supplies were so short that Berliners took to carving up dead horses in the streets for meat. The women of Berlin were fair game for punishment and rape by Red Army soldiers.

As the Red Army overran the city, fighting house by house, it became clear that all was lost. Suicide was the preferred option of many top Nazis. Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' wife Magda poisoned all six of the couples' children before they committed suicide. On April 30, Adolf Hitler and his bride Eva Braun committed suicide in the bunker. Their corpses were doused with gasoline in the Chancellery garden and burned.

U.S. soldiers, left, greet their Russian counterparts on a wrecked bridge over the Elbe River at Torgau, Germany, about 50 miles southwest of Berlin, on April 26, 1945. It was the first time troops from the two armies had linked up during the final Allied push toward the German capital, which fell about a week later. AP



U.S. Gen. Omar Bradley, left, and Soviet Marshal Ivan Konev celebrate at a victory banquet at a villa near Berlin on May 5, 1945. Germany would formally surrender in the next few days. WILLIAM C. ALLEN AP

On May 2, 1945, Berlin was officially taken by the Red Army, and the Soviet hammer and sickle flew over the Reichstag building.

The Germans attempted to surrender only to the U.S. and Britain, but Eisenhower made clear that he would accept only unconditional surrender to all the Allies. Nevertheless, Stalin insisted on a separate surrender of German forces to the Red Army only. The ceremony took place the following day in the ruins of Berlin.

In this seemingly small squabble over how to end World War II in Europe, we might glimpse a flowering seed of the Cold War. As Stalin sought to impose communism upon Eastern Europe, replacing Hitler's tyranny with his own, it is remarkable that Berlin would transform into a symbol of freedom and resistance in the years and decades to come.

The Berlin Air Lift and Berlin Wall, in both its construction and dismantling, have imprinted new meanings on our consciousness of what the city stands for. As we remember Victory in Europe Day, it is proper that we reflect not only on the past and the worst of what V-E Day invokes, but also look to the long road forward traveled since that day in 1945.

WWII AMERICA COMES HOME

Stay in 1940s style

The National WWII Museum's official hotel immerses guests in art and artifacts of the era

An Art Deco mural of wartime workers and a grand chandelier define the lobby. PHOTOS BY THE HIGGINS HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER

Now there's another reason to visit The National WWII Museum — a really cool new hotel right at the site.

The Higgins Hotel New Orleans, Curio Collection by Hilton, in the Arts and Warehouse District features 230 rooms, four dining options — including the city's newest rooftop bar — and 18,000 square feet of meeting and event space, all boasting an Art Deco design.

Think a 1940s hotel with WWII memorabilia throughout. All proceeds generated will support the ongoing educational mission of the museum.

There, you'll find Gen. George Patton's piano; the Higgins Boat Trophy, presented to Gen. Arthur Trudeau for his service in the Amphibian Command; and a 1943 portrait of Higgins Industries shipbuilder Andrew Jackson Higgins, for whom the hotel is named.

Photos throughout depict life in New Orleans during the war, as well as custom acrylic prints of the Medal of Honor, the highest decoration awarded to U.S. servicemembers. There is a grand chandelier in the lobby and a mural by celebrated Art Deco artist Michael Kungl depicting wartime factory workers set on the backdrop of the New Orleans skyline.

Just off the lobby lies an impressive bronze staircase, complemented by handmade glass re-creations of 40 of the most commonly awarded medals and

The Higgins Hotel New Orleans opened in December 2019 at the museum site.

Provisions, in the lobby, offers grab-and-go baked goods, coffee and snacks.

The hotel's 230 rooms feature artwork depicting the war and the home front.

About the museum

The National WWII Museum tells the story of the American experience in the war that changed the world — why it was fought, how it was won, and what it means today. It was dedicated in 2000 as The National D-Day Museum and has now been designated by Congress as America's National WWII Museum. The 2018 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Awards ranked the Museum No. 3 in the nation and No. 8 in the world.
For more information, call 877-813-3329 or 504-528-1944 or visit nationalww2museum.org.

There's 18,000 square feet of space to accommodate meetings and events. PHOTOS BY THE HIGGINS HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER

ribbons of World War II. You can also see preserved letters from the war and rare colorized photos.

There are three presidential suites on the eighth floor, named and themed after Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman, the presidents during the war, and Dwight Eisenhower, the WWII commander who would be elected president in 1952.

Executive chef Virgile Brandel oversees dining at The Higgins Hotel, said to rival the best of New Orleans, which is saying a lot. The signature restaurant, Café Normandie, offers a menu of rustic French cuisine under a large hand-finished vinyl mural of the beaches of Normandy.

There's also the Sainte-Mère-Église Private Dining Room, steeped in French glamour, from its polished nickel and brass to provincial-style furnishings, all beneath an exquisite chandelier. During the holidays, an extra special treat: a classic New Orleans Reveillon menu with standouts like boudin-stuffed turkey breast served with skillet collard greens and tasso ham.

Kilroy's is the hotel's lobby bar, where WWII history enthusiasts can enjoy a tribute to the iconic wartime cartoon character Kilroy. Relax in an aviator-style chair with entree options like a "Kilroy Was Here" Hamburger, which features an 8-ounce special meat blend patty topped with smoked bacon, Tomme cheese, a specialty comeback sauce and pickles all sandwiched on a fresh-baked Brioche bun.

Up at Rosie's on the Roof — the rooftop bar that pays tribute to the hardworking women who produced weaponry, vehicles and supplies on the home front — guests can take in panoramic views of the museum and the New Orleans skyline while sipping craft cocktails. A must-try is The Riveter, a rum cocktail created for two people and served in a vintage canteen, similar to the one Rosie and other riveters would bring to work every day.

The neighborhood is home to more than 25 art galleries and a variety of museums, including the Contemporary Arts Center, the Ogden Museum of Southern Art and the Louisiana Civil War Museum. An easy ride on the historic St. Charles Avenue streetcar line gets you to some of the city's most beautiful homes, the Central Business District, Audubon Park and the French Quarter.

For info: *higginshotelnola.com* or 504-528-1941

— *The National WWII Museum*

WWII AMERICA COMES HOME

Capt. Ernest Krause, played by Tom Hanks, is tasked with protecting an Allied convoy being hunted by German submarines in "Greyhound." NIKO TAVERNISE/SONY PICTURES

It all rides on these ships

Tom Hanks' new film 'Greyhound' dramatizes a critical chapter of WWII

"Battles might be won or lost, enterprises might succeed or miscarry, territories might be gained or quitted, but dominating all our power to carry on the war, or even keep ourselves alive, lay our mastery of the ocean routes and the free approach and entry to our ports."

Winston Churchill The Grand Alliance

Capt. Ernest Krause, played by Tom Hanks, and the crew of his destroyer keep an eye out for German U-boats in "Greyhound," due for release in June. SONY PICTURES

Kim Willis USA TODAY

Tom Hanks in command is always a good look. ▮ The star of "Saving Private Ryan" is back in action in World War II in "Greyhound," an upcoming film based on C.S. Forester's 1955 war novel "The Good Shepherd."

Hanks plays Navy Capt. Ernest Krause, who in the early days of U.S. involvement in the war is entrusted with his first wartime command — a destroyer, code name Greyhound, protecting an Allied convoy of 37 ships crossing the Atlantic. Things don't go as planned, of course, and the convoy finds itself fending off packs of Nazi submarines in murky waters, while a stoic Hanks vows to "bring hell down from on high" on the attackers.

Hanks wrote the screenplay for the film, which is directed by Aaron Schneider ("Get Low"). Stephen Graham, Elisabeth Shue and Rob Morgan co-star.

"Greyhound" is scheduled for release on June 12.

The Battle of the Atlantic

Keith Huxen of The National WWII Museum provides context for the period depicted in the film "Greyhound":

The Battle of the Atlantic was the lifeline between the Allies, with American military supplies flowing to the Soviet Union, and American supplies and troops accumulating in the United Kingdom for the ultimate invasion of Europe, D-Day at Normandy. If our merchant mariners and sailors beat the U-boats, we had a chance to win the war, but if the Germans defeated them on the Atlantic, then we would have no chance — Hitler would have already won.

Few people today understand that in 1942 we were losing the Battle of the Atlantic, and even after we reversed our fortunes in 1943, it was an extremely close-run struggle, with the entire outcome of the war hanging in the balance.

Adolf Hitler sought to drown the Allies' chances for victory in the cold waters of the Atlantic, but instead our mastery in the Battle of the Atlantic allowed us to flood Europe with our forces and eventually bring down the Third Reich.

'Inge's War' offers new insights

In the new book "Inge's War: A German Woman's Story of Family, Secrets, and Survival Under Hitler," Svenja O'Donnell leans on her own family history to illuminate a lesser-known World War II experience: that of Germany's bystanders, those who neither supported the Nazi regime nor risked all to resist it.

O'Donnell weaves more than a decade of conversations together with archival research and travel to chronicle her grandmother Inge's life from the rise of the Nazis through the brutal postwar period. We see Inge fall in love in Berlin's underground jazz clubs and bear a child out of wedlock after the father, who had no desire to fight, was sent to the Eastern Front. She spearheads her family's dramatic flight as the Red Army closed in, her elderly parents and toddler daughter — O'Donnell's mother — in tow. Finally, the terrible secret Inge had been keeping for more than half a century: the act of violence that finally parted her from the man she loved.

Even as "Inge's War" vividly recounts this intimate story, it also tells the story of a granddaughter breaking through the silence so common to German-descended families around World War II, confronting not only her family's suffering, but also their legacy of neutrality and inaction.