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Activity

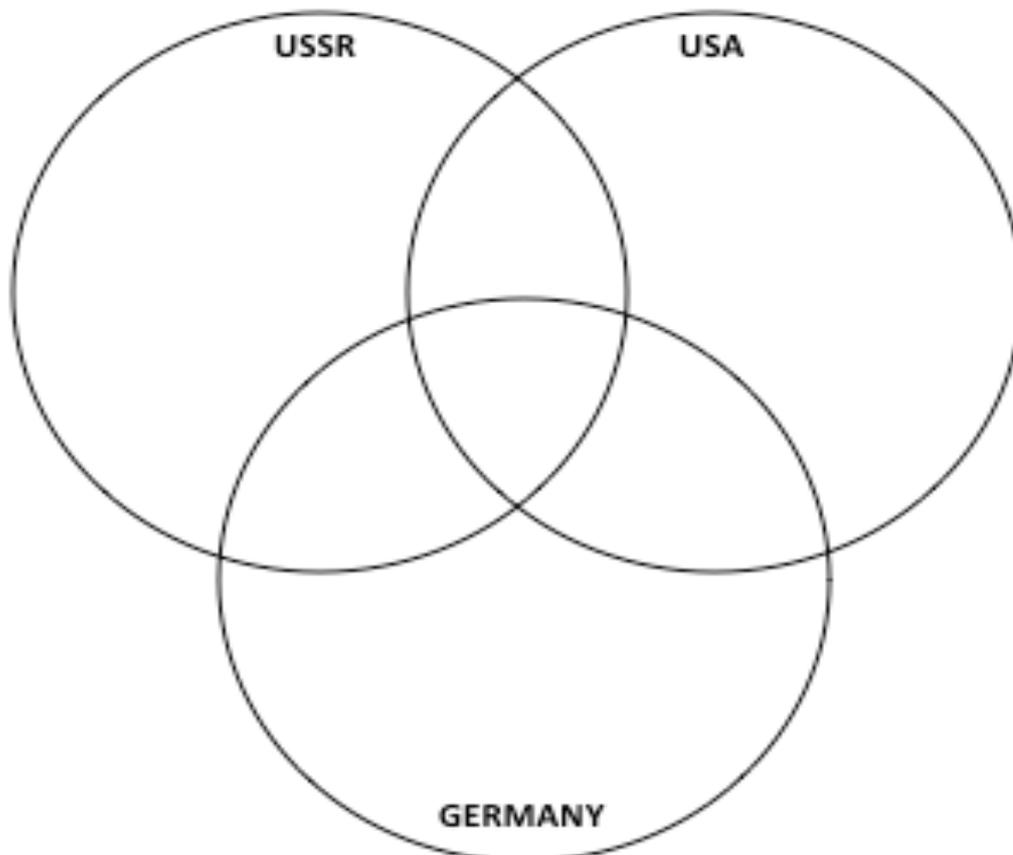
Reasons for the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War

Robin Bunce and Laura Williams

You can use this activity alongside Richard Overy's article, 'The Great Patriotic war', on p. 22 of this issue of the magazine. The article outlines reasons why the Soviet Union emerged victorious from the Second World War. The following tasks will help to improve your understanding of this topic.

Task 1

Copy the Venn diagram below and use it to record the reasons for the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War. If a reason relates to one country alone, note it in the appropriate place near the outside of the diagram. If a reason relates to two or three countries, note it in the appropriate intersections in the central part of the diagram.



Task 2

Read the following source and then summarise the argument it makes:

To this day, Stalin's ultimate triumph in the war with Hitler is used by some as grounds for exonerating Stalinist practices. A typical pro-Stalin argument asserts that, for all his sins and crimes, Stalin presided over Russian victory in the Second World War. But this claim is easily refuted. If Stalin had been rational, all those millions who were made to starve in the great famine of 1932–33 or liquidated as a result of Stalin's ideological intolerance would have been available to Russia as able-bodied men and women to put their shoulders to the wheels of agricultural and industrial production and carry rifles in the war. The purges of the 1930s crippled the Red Army and were largely responsible for its great reverse in the war with Finland and then in the first phase of the Soviet-German war. In a sense, the Soviet people won the war despite Stalin and his policies rather than thanks to him.

Aleksandr Čubarov (2001) *Russia's Bitter Path to Modernity: A History of the Soviet and Post-Soviet Eras*

Task 3

Using the information from the source above, together with your completed Venn diagram from Task 1, plan an answer to the following question:

How far can Stalin be held responsible for the Soviet Union's victory in the Second World War?