



In 1942, the Allies launched "Operation Torch," the counter-attack against the Axis powers. The British had been fighting the Germans in eastern North Africa since 1940. Finally, in October 1942, Rommel's eastern advance toward the Suez Canal was stopped. The British began driving the Germans back. Soon thereafter Operation Torch landed Allies in northern Africa to pinch in the Germans from the west. Actually, the Allies attacked North Africa for two reasons. First, the Allies eventually needed to invade Europe from the north. Their control of the Mediterranean region prior to that invasion would make things a lot easier. The Allies felt that invading Europe first through Italy would weaken Axis strength and help the northern invasion. The stepping stone to Italy was North Africa. The map below shows the

major movements and dates of Operation Torch. Second, the Allies wanted to help out the Soviet Union, a fellow ally. The Soviet Union was worn out by its heroic resistance against the German army. Because the Axis powers had no other challenges the region, Germany had concentrated its forces on conquering Russia. So, Russia pleaded with the other Allies to form a "second front," or second line of combat, against the Axis powers. This would cause the Axis to spread out its forces and consider something other than the Soviet Union. But the United States and Britain were reluctant to assault the European mainland at that time. Instead, the second front was set up by Operation Torch. By February 1943, German troops in the Soviet Union were being driven back.

The North African Campaign, 1942-1943

Geography Application

Interpreting Maps and Text

1. Which African nations were invaded by the Allies in Operation Torch?

2. In what direction did the invading Allies move after that?

3. What important waterway was Rommel seeking as he advanced east?

4. In what country was Rommel stopped?

Which direction did the British push the Germans after that?

5. In what country did the British and the rest of the Allies unite their forces?

What was the result?

6. What Allied country was Operation Torch intended to help immediately?

7. After the victory of Operation Torch, Winston Churchill said that "the soft underbelly of Europe" lay open to Allied attack. What did he mean by that, and what did the Allies do next to back up the claim?
