

World War II

A Summary and Timeline
of the major events



Leading up to the War in Europe

Germany	 Adolf Hitler	
Italy	 Benito Mussolini	
Japan	 Hideki Tojo	

January 1933 – Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany and his Nazi Party takes power

October 1936 – Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy form the Rome-Berlin Axis Treaty

November 1936 – Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan sign the Anti-Comintern Pact – an agreement against Communism and Russia

Imperial Japan advances across Asia

In July 1937, Japan mounts a surprise attack on China.

By 1942 it will have taken control over vast parts of Eastern and Southeast Asia including many small islands in the Pacific Ocean



Reunification of Germany



By 1938 Nazi Germany has brought together the Germanic speaking people in the Rhineland, Anschluss, Sudetenland and Lebensraum regions of Europe with little or no resistance.

Those opposed or persecuted by Hitler's totalitarian regime try to flee Germany for safer places

Appeasement

A diplomatic policy of making political or material concessions to an aggressive power in order to avoid conflict.



British Prime Minister Chamberlain waving his signed copy of the Munich Pact claiming success

September 30, 1938, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, French Premier Edouard Daladier, and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sign the Munich Pact, which seals the fate of Czechoslovakia, virtually handing it over to Germany in the name of peace.

Upon return to Britain, Chamberlain would declare that the meeting had achieved “peace in our time.”

Kristallnacht takes place

November 9 to November 10, 1938, Nazis in Germany torched synagogues, vandalized Jewish homes, schools and businesses and killed close to 100 Jews. During the “Night of Broken Glass,” some 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps. German Jews had been subjected to repressive policies since 1933, however, prior to Kristallnacht, these Nazi policies had been primarily nonviolent.



War Breaks Out in Europe!



September 1, 1939 Germany invades Poland and World War II begins

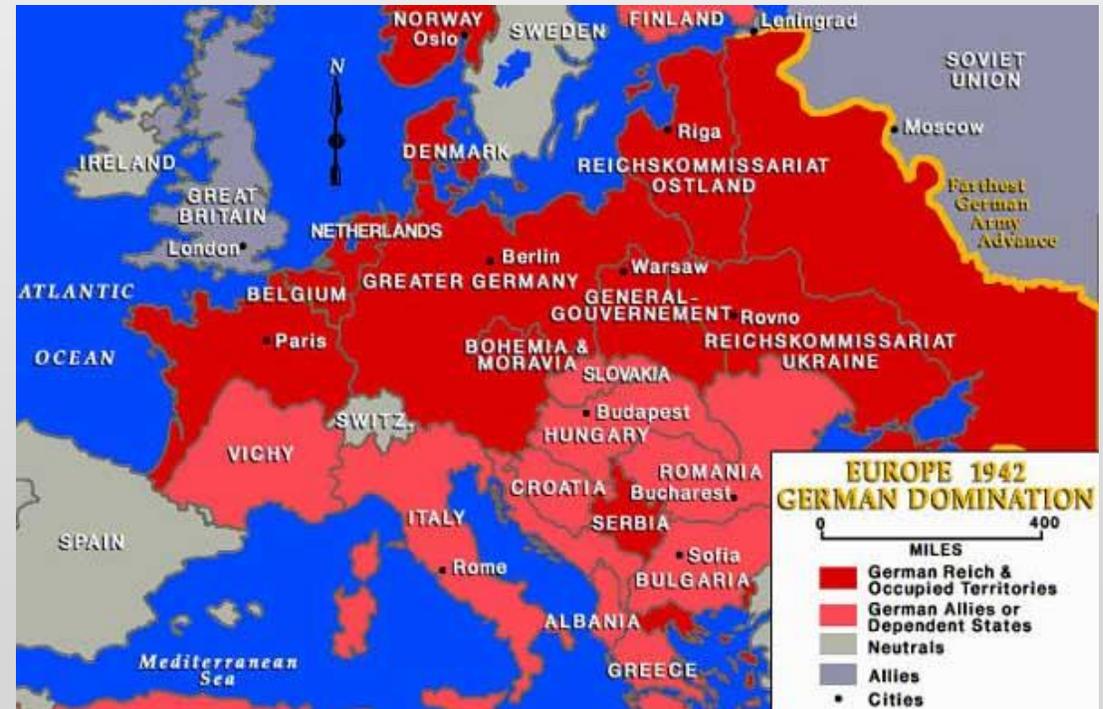
September 3, 1939 France and Great Britain declare war on Germany

Germany uses the military tactic of Blitzkrieg or Lightning War to quickly advance across Europe

Germany continues to conquer Europe

Between April and June, 1940
Germany invades and controls
most of Western Europe
including Denmark, Norway,
Netherlands, Belgium and
northern France.

Paris surrenders to the Nazis
without a shot being fired!



Winston Churchill now leads Britain!

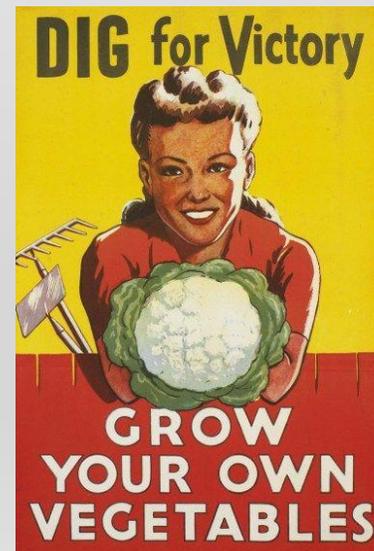


May 30, 1940

Britain elects a new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill who brings together the British Empire and vows to stop the Nazi Regime.

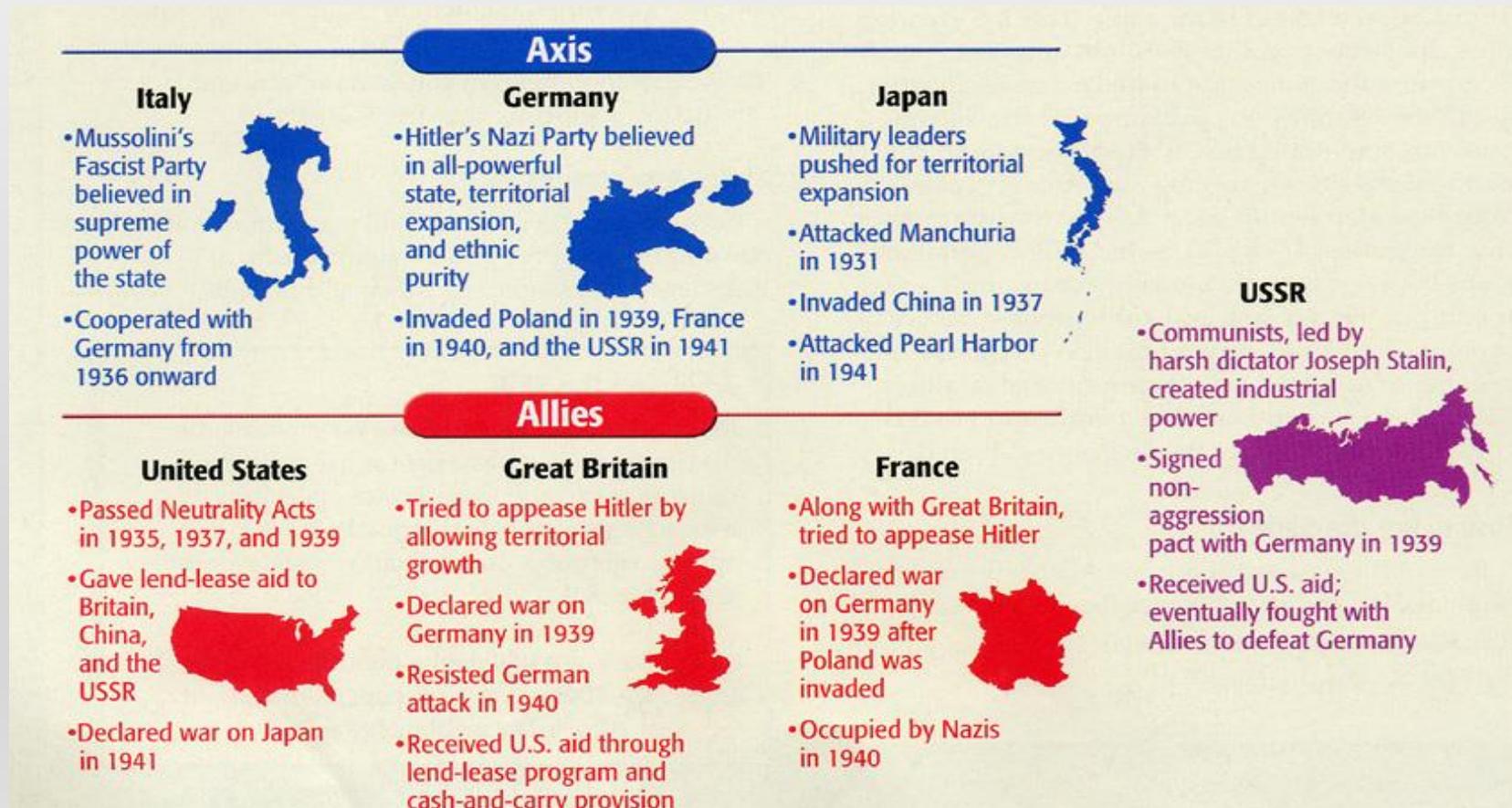
However, British forces are forced to evacuate Dunkirk in France and the British Navy fails to stop German advances in Norway and Denmark

The War Effort and the Home Front



Italy enters the war!

June – September, 1940: Germany, Italy, and Japan sign the Tripartite Pact creating the Axis Powers. The world is now divided between the Axis powers, the Allied Powers, and Neutral countries

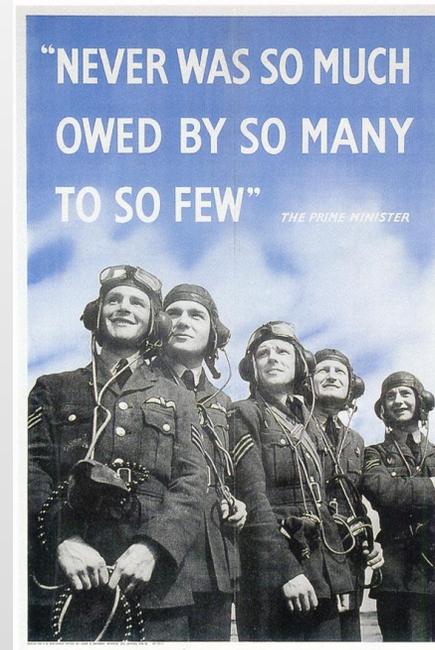


The London Blitz and the Battle of Britain

1940 - Germany began Operation Sea Lion, the bombings of British cities prior to their invasion of Britain.

They underestimated the British fighter pilots who shot down so many of their bombers and the pride of the British people not to submit to the Nazi threat.

Hitler had to cancel his plans due to the heavy losses sustained to his Luftwaffe (air force)



Hitler invades Russia!



As early as 1925, Hitler vaguely declared in his political autobiography *Mein Kampf* that he would invade the Soviet Union, the German people needed to secure Lebensraum ("living space") to ensure the survival of Germany for generations to come. His surprise attack, Operation Barbarossa, would be a major and costly error on Hitler's part



The Holocaust

The Holocaust, also known as the *Shoah*, was the genocide of the European Jews. Between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews, around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population.

In addition Gypsies, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, blacks, the physically and mentally disabled were also victims of this genocide



America enters the war!



December 7, 1941

Japan launches a surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii and other regions in the Pacific Rim. The following day America officially declares war on Japan.

In response, due to alliances, Germany declares war on America.

The war is now in the Atlantic and the Pacific regions of the world.



The Big Three meet to discuss strategies

The Allied Powers:

Franklin D. Roosevelt – United States

Joseph Stalin – U.S.S.R

Winston Churchill – Great Britain

Several meetings will take place during the next four years to defeat the Axis Powers.

First, defeat Germany and control Europe, then defeat Japan.



Allied victories start to make a difference



June 1942 – The U.S. Navy defeats the Japanese at the Battle of Midway in the Pacific.

July 1942 – Allies invade and liberate Sicily.

September 1943 – Italy surrenders to the Allies but Hitler helps Mussolini escape and set up a government in Northern Italy.

Mussolini will later be brutally murdered by his own people.

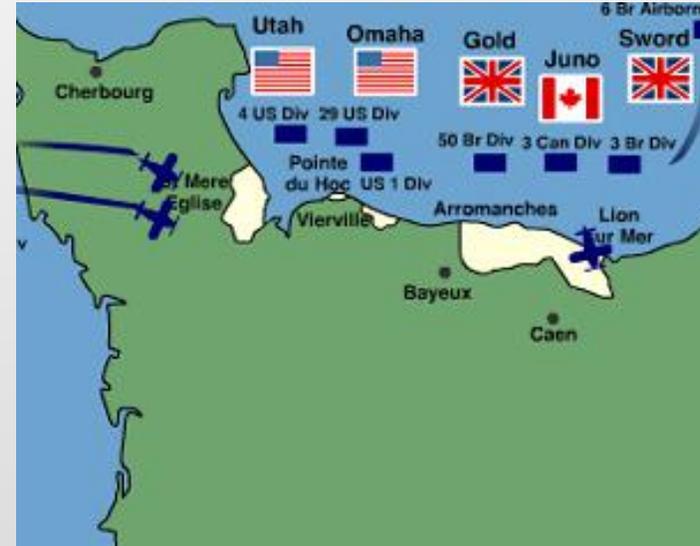


Palermitans welcome American troops in 1943
At center-left is a mother holding a baby

The Normandy Invasion (D-Day)

June 6, 1944 a combined Allied assault led by General Dwight D. Eisenhower, lands in France. They encounter heavy German resistance. After months of fighting, Allied forces invade all of France and push back the Germans.

At the same time, Soviet troops start an offensive to push back the Germans all the way to Berlin.



Germany suffers major defeats

August 1944 – Paris is liberated

December 1944 – German troops begin a counter-attack at the Battle of the Bulge.

After bitter fighting, they lose to the Allies. The German military is now in retreat and losing morale.

The Soviets continue their push towards Berlin also capturing many German soldiers



Island-Hopping in the Pacific starts



February 1945. The war in the Pacific intensifies. American soldiers capture Iwo Jima and other key islands, getting closer to Japan. Fierce resistance is met from the Japanese.

Other Allied troops, led by the British, start the land campaign to liberate Asia from Japanese control.

F.D.R. dies!

April 12, 1945 – the President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, dies of complications from polio. His Vice-President, Harry S. Truman is sworn in as the new President. The Big Three has now changed but the plan to end the war has not.

Truman finds out about the Manhattan Project, the secret plan to build an atomic bomb.

He does not tell the other Allies!



Hitler commmits suicide!

May 7, 1945 Germany surrenders!

**It is known a V.E. Day
(Victory in Europe) Day**



By March 1945, U.S. General George Patton has crossed the Rhine River into Germany. British troops led by Field Marshall Montgomery after liberating North Africa are now also outside Berlin. Soviet troops are beginning the house-to-house destruction of Berlin.

It is the end of Germany and Hitler takes his own life.

Campaign to defeat Japan

Progress has been made, at the cost of many lives, to defeat Japan in the Pacific region.

United States bombers set fire to Tokyo and ask for an Unconditional Surrender. Japan refuses.

Allied troops start to prepare for an invasion. The Japanese military seizes power and some want to surrender, others do not want to give up their Emperor.



Japan Surrenders



Enola Gay, the plane that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan



August 6, 1945 the United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The city is devastated.

August 9, 1945 a second bomb is dropped on Nagasaki. Similar to Hiroshima, the city is devastated.

September 2, 1945 Japan officially surrenders to General Douglas MacArthur and the Allies.

The War is over, it is VJ Day!

World War II Deaths

■ Military deaths (millions)
■ Civilian deaths (millions)

+■ Total deaths (millions)
■ Total deaths (1945) as % of population (1939)

