

War in Europe

Austria and Czechoslovakia Fall

- On March 12, 1938, Hitler marched into Austria and took it.
- Austria had about 6 million Germans who were excited to be part of Germany.
- The US/World did nothing.
- Hitler wanted the Sudetenland which was part Czechoslovakia because it was the home to 3 million Germans.
- At the **Munich Conference** on September 30, 1938, Hitler promised Great Britain and France to NEVER ask for anything if he got the Sudetenland.
- Great Britain and France gave in because they wanted to avoid war.
- Both countries had adopted a policy of **appeasement** – giving up principles to pacify the aggressor.



World War II: German Advances, 1939–1941



SKILLBUILDER:
Interpreting Maps

- 1. Region** Which countries did Germany invade?
- 2. Location** In what way was Germany's geographic location an advantage when it was on the offensive in the war?

The Soviet Union Declares Neutrality

- In 1939, Germany and the Soviet Union agreed to never fight against each other signing the **nonaggression pact**.
- Germany was motivated to sign the pact because it didn't want to fight on two fronts – the western and eastern front.
- The Soviet Union signed the pact because they would get half of Poland.
- But fascist Germany and the communist U.S.S.R. did not like each other.

Blitzkrieg in Poland and the Phony War

- *Blitzkrieg* is lightning war – it's a fast and aggressive attack using tanks and airplanes.
- On September 1, 1939, the ***Luftwaffe***, or German air force roared over Poland attacking military bases, airfields, railroads and cities.
- On September 3, two days following the invasion of Poland, Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.
- It took about a month for Poland to fall to Germany.
- At the beginning of WWII the war was called a phony war because not much fighting was taking place.
- But by April of 1940, Hitler had taken the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg.

The Fall of France

- The German offensive trapped almost 400,000 British and French soldiers as they fled to the beaches of Dunkirk on the French side of the English Channel.
- In less than a week, a makeshift fleet of fishing trawlers, tugboats, river barges, pleasure craft—more than 800 vessels in all—ferried about 330,000 British, French, and Belgian troops to safety across the Channel.
- A few days later, Italy entered the war on the side of Germany and invaded France from the south as the Germans closed in on Paris from the north.
- Germans marched towards Paris and on June of 1940 France surrendered to Germany.
- After France fell, a French general named Charles de Gaulle fled to England, where he set up a government-in-exile. De Gaulle proclaimed defiantly, “France has lost a battle, but France has not lost the war.”



The Battle of Britain

- In the summer of 1940, the Germans began to assemble an invasion fleet along the French coast but because its naval power could not compete with that of Britain, Germany also launched an air war at the same time. The *Luftwaffe* began making bombing runs over Britain.
- Its goal was to gain total control of the skies by destroying **Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF)**. Hitler had 2,600 planes at his disposal.
- On a single day—August 15—approximately 2,000 German planes ranged over Britain. Every night for two solid months, bombers pounded London.
- The RAF fought back brilliantly. With the help of a new technological device called **radar**, British pilots accurately plotted the flight paths of German planes, even in darkness.
- On September 15, 1940 the RAF shot down over 185 German planes; at the same time, they lost only 26 aircraft. Six weeks later, Hitler called off the invasion of Britain indefinitely.
- Still, German bombers continued to pound Britain's cities trying to disrupt production and break civilian morale. British pilots also bombed German cities. Civilians in both countries unrelentingly carried on.

