



Western Civilization from 1650 to the Present

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TOPIC 14.1. WORLD WAR II

Supplement to Chambers, *The Western Experience*, Chapter 29: The Nightmare: World War II, pp. 1061-1086.

<p>INVASION OF POLAND Appeasement German Invasion Blitzkrieg Partition of Poland</p>	<p>After years of German APPEASEMENT, Hitler invaded the Polish corridor and both Britain and France declared war. In order to avoid a two front war like that of World War I, Hitler signed a ten-year nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union. They agreed to split lands conquered in Eastern Europe. On August 31, 1939, GERMANY INVADED POLAND with a massive and quick attack known as BLITZKRIEG. Poland was defeated by September 27, and PARTITIONED between Germany and the Soviet Union.</p>
<p>GERMAN VICTORIES Denmark, Norway, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Belgium France</p>	<p>After a six-month break in fighting, on April 9, 1940, GERMANY DEFEATED DENMARK in less than a day. NORWAY was then defeated in two days. In order to gain access to France Germany defeated LUXEMBOURG, the NETHERLANDS, and BELGIUM. Through Belgium Germany was able to attack France while avoiding the Maginot defense line.</p> <p>Under Mussolini Italy also joined Germany's attack on France. On June 22, 1940, FRANCE SURRENDERED to Germany. Under the terms of surrender Germany occupied the northern two-thirds of the country while French Prime Minister Petain governed from the southern city of Vichy. However not all the French gave up the fight against Germany. CHARLES DE GAULLE LED AN UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE against the Nazis.</p>
<p>BRITISH DEFENSE RAF Held Off German Attack U.S. Lend Lease</p>	<p>After France, Hitler turned his sights toward BRITAIN. Hitler hoped to first use his air force (Luftwaffe) to knock out Britain's air force (RAF). He then hoped to launch a powerful sea born attack known as Operation Sea Lion. However, the RAF valiantly defended their country and was successful in holding off the German attack. The UNITED STATES aided Britain by passing laws such as the LEND AND LEASE ACT, which supplied Britain with weapons but not troops. Roosevelt hoped that America could be the "arsenal of democracy." US ships guarded British merchant ships traveling on the Atlantic.</p>
<p>GERMAN ATTACKS Eastern Europe Soviet Union</p>	<p>With failure in Britain evident, Germany began to attack EASTERN EUROPE. Germany first defeated GREECE and YUGOSLAVIA. BULGARIA, ROMANIA, and HUNGARY allied with Hitler and the axis powers. Germany broke its treaty and invaded the SOVIET UNION, surrounding Leningrad and Moscow.</p>
<p>JAPANESE ATTACKS Manchuria, China Pearl Harbor U.S. Declaration of War</p>	<p>JAPAN began to conquer lands in Asia as Germany was in Europe. It first conquered the Chinese province of MANCHURIA in 1931 and then invaded CHINA itself in 1937. When the United States felt that Japan was threatening US controlled Philippines as well as other European controlled colonies, it cut off vital supplies that Japan needed for its war effort. In retaliation, on December 7, 1941, the Japanese devastated the US naval base at PEARL HARBOR. Outraged, the UNITED STATES DECLARED WAR ON JAPAN and entered World War II against the Axis powers. The Allies won victories at The BATTLE OF THE CORAL SEA and at MIDWAY, turning the tide of war in the Allies favor. The United States then began island hopping or moving from one island to the next conquering Japanese holdings.</p>
<p>ALLIED VICTORIES Coral Sea Midway North Africa Stalingrad</p>	<p>In NORTH AFRICA, the United States under Eisenhower and the British under Montgomery won a decisive victory against Germany's Erwin Rommel, formerly a very successful German tank strategist who earned the nickname "desert fox." The Nazis suffered further setbacks when the Russians took advantage of the winter to defeat the Germans at STALINGRAD. Soviet troops then began to win victory after victory.</p>

<p>ALLIED VICTORIES Sicily, Italy D-Day, German Surrender</p>	<p>The ALLIES then began to invade Europe through Italy. They conquered SICILY and ITALY changed alliances, switching from axis support to ally support. The "nail in the coffin" for the German Third Reich came on June 6, 1944, when the Allies launched an invasion code-named D-DAY on Normandy, France. The Allied forces pushed the Germans east as the Soviet Union pushed German troops west. The two sides met at Berlin where GERMANY WAS FORCED TO SURRENDER. Hitler could not bear defeat and killed himself.</p>
<p>Japan</p>	<p>Meanwhile, the Japanese were able to continue to hold off allied forces. Truman decided to end the war against Japan quickly and decisively with the use of the United State's secret weapon, the ATOMIC BOMB. Bombs were dropped on both HIROSHIMA and NAGASAKI killing 120,000 nearly instantly. Aghast at these horrors, Emperor Hirohito surrendered on September 2, 1945.</p> <p>Overall, over 40 million people were killed in the war.</p>
<p>ONLINE RESOURCES</p>	<p>For more information on this topic, explore one or more of the following online resources:</p> <p>World War II Oral Histories: First hand accounts of World War II participants.</p> <p>World War II Poster Collection: Extensive collection of World War II posters. Searchable by date, title, or topic.</p> <p>World War II Links on the Internet: Chronological and topical list of links relating to World War II.</p>
<p>DISCUSSION QUESTIONS</p>	<p>Drawing on the resources you have had an opportunity to explore (textbook, course documents, online resources, library resources), answer one or more of the following questions:</p> <p>What was the significance of the Polish invasion in triggering the conflict?</p> <p>How did Hitler lose the war against the Soviet Union?</p> <p>What events in 1944-45 led directly to the German surrender?</p>