**World War II Begins – Sept 1, 1939**  
Hitler plans to invade Poland  
 USSR and Germany want to split Poland -- Nonaggression Pact  
 USSR to receive Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania  
   
 Aug. 1939: Hitler uses concentration camp inmates to fake a Polish attack on German radio station  
 “Operation Canned Goods”  
 **Sept. 1 1939: Germany invades Poland**  
  
 W/in 3 weeks, USSR enters eastern Poland  
  
Sept 3 -- England and France declare war on Germany  
  
**Blitzkrieg (lightening war)**  
 Effective German war tactic  
  
 Poles easily taken over – no help from Allies  
  
Hitler/France/England start peace talks  
  
 Meanwhile, Hitler plans to take over France  
  
April 1940 – Germany invades Denmark and Norway  
  
 Peace talks end  
  
 By June 10, both countries taken over  
  
 Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister of Great Britain, replacing Chamberlain  
  
May 9, 1940 – Germany attacks Netherlands and Belgium  
   
 Both fell quickly  
  
 **British soldiers stuck in Dunkirk, Belgium**  
  
 Royal Air Force and Navy completed heroic rescue of British soldiers  
  
**June 17, 1940 France overrun by Germany and divided**:  
  
 Northern France under German control  
  
 Southern France under French puppet gov’t  
  
 **NOW A WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND GERMANY – Royal Air Force vs. Luftwaffe**  
  
August 1940 Battle of Britain (Germany v Great Britain)  
 Battle of attrition – both sides losing many and gaining nothing substantial  
 German morale wanes after failed battles against London  
 Hitler stops battle to reconvene   
 **WWII BEGINS!** In 1939 Hitler carefully planned his move against Poland. England and France had warned that an attack would mean war. Russia was geographically able to help Poland if it chose. To the amazement of the world (because of the strict political differences between the 2 countries), the Nazi Germans signed a nonaggression deal with the Communist USSR. They agreed to divide Poland between them and the Russians were allowed to take the 3 Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania as well.

Hitler now left no doubt of his intentions. In August 1939 he told his officers: “Close heart to pity. Proceed brutally.” Before Hitler attacked Poland however, he needed an excuse. In “Operation Canned Goods”, inmates of a concentration camp dressed in Polish army uniforms “attacked” a German radio station. The Germans attacked Poland the next day, Sept 1. All raid participants were killed to prevent information leaks.  
  
 Hitler hoped England and France would not interfere, but the British and French declared war on Sept 3. For the Poles, this brought little comfort. Hitler's BLITZKRIEG (lightening war) was highly effective. Blitzkreig began with massive air attacks, hitting communication centers, and terrorizing cities. Armored land units then struck before defenders could get on their feet again. The Poles fought with no outside help. The odds were overwhelming. Within 3 weeks, the Nazis had gone past the line they had drawn with Stalin. Russian troops moved into eastern Poland. About 200,000 Poles escaped. Many made it to England where they fought beside the Allies.  
   
 Even though England and France were supposedly at war with Germany, at first there was no fighting. Hitler said: “I have neither toward England nor France any war claims, nor has the German nation.” But not even Prime Minister Chamberlain bought that. He said that England's purpose was “to redeem Europe from the...fear of German aggression.”   
While Hitler talked peace, he planned his next moves. The French stayed secure behind defense line, which guarded French-German boundary. The 250 miles between Belgium and France were unprotected, however. Across from France's 70 divisions and 3,000 tanks were 33 German divisions without tanks. All France needed was the will to fight, but it had none. England's Royal Air Force sat on the ground.   
  
 The German invasion of Denmark and Norway on April 9 1940, ended Britain’s neutrality. Denmark was overrun before anyone knew it. Norway was harder for the Germans to defeat. The Norwegians, with the help of English and French paratroopers, stubbornly fought German troops, but ultimately failed. British failure in Norway doomed Prime Minister Chamberlain, and Winston Churchill replaced him May 10. On June 10 Norway surrendered to Germany.   
   
 On May 9, 1940, blitzkrieg struck again as the Germans attacked the Netherlands and Belgium. The Dutch were easily overwhelmed. Their queen escaped on May 13 and all resistance ended. Belgium received some support from the English and French, but their collapse was so quick that the troops sent to help were trapped and withdrew to Dunkirk. Belgium was lost in 8 days. A heroic effort by the Royal Navy and volunteers using boats of all sorts rescued the 337,000 Allied soldiers at Dunkirk from May 26-June 4.  
   
 A line of defense was set up to protect the rest of France. In some places, it prevented an easy German invasion, but behind the front lines there were no reserves to plug a break in the line. On June 21, the Germans presented surrender terms to the French; the surrender took place in the same railroad car where Germans had signed the armistice in 1918. France was to be divided; Germany occupied northern France, and southern France would be governed by a puppet government. General Charles DeGaulle escaped to England and established the Free French Army.   
  
 On June 17, 1940, the defeated French signed an armistice and essentially quit World War II. Britain now stood alone against the power of Germany’s military forces, which had conquered most of Western Europe in less than two months. But Prime Minister Winston Churchill rallied his stubborn. But Britain’s success in continuing the war would very much depend on the Royal Air Force’s ability to stop the German Luftwaffe’s efforts to gain air superiority. The Germans had major problems: they had no navy left after the costly conquest of Norway, their army was unprepared for any form of amphibious operations, and the Luftwaffe (Germany's airborne branch) had suffered heavy losses in the west. Even more serious, the Germans. They wasted most of July in waiting for a British surrender and attacked only in August.

Name \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ **INVASION OF THE SOVIET UNION, 1941**  
 The destruction of the Soviet Union by military force, the elimination of the perceived Communist threat to Germany, and the seizure of prime land within Soviet borders for long-term German settlement had been a core policy of the Nazi movement since the 1920s. Adolf Hitler had always thought of the German-Soviet nonaggression pact, signed on August 23, 1939, as temporary. In July 1940, just weeks after Germany took over much of France, Hitler decided to attack the Soviet Union. On December 18, 1940, he signed Directive 21 (code-named Operation "Barbarossa"), the first operational order for the invasion of the Soviet Union.  
  
 From the beginning of planning, German military and police authorities intended to wage a war of annihilation against the Communist state as well as the Jews of the Soviet Union, whom they characterized as forming the "racial basis" for the Soviet state. During the winter and spring months of 1941, officials of the German government negotiated arrangements for the deployment of special units of the Security Police (SS) and the Security Service (SD) behind the front lines to physically annihilate Jews, Communists, and other persons deemed to be dangerous to establishment of long-term German rule on Soviet territory.  
  
 With nearly 200 divisions at full fighting strength, German forces invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, less than two years after the German-Soviet Pact was signed. Three army groups, including more than three million German soldiers, supported by 650,000 troops from Germany's allies (Finland and Romania), and later supported by units from Italy, Croatia, Slovakia and Hungary, attacked the Soviet Union across a broad front, from the Baltic Sea in the north to the Black Sea in the south. For months, the Soviet leadership had refused to listen to warnings from the Western Powers of the German troop buildup along its western border. Germany and its Axis partners achieved almost complete surprise. Much of the Soviet air force was destroyed on the ground and the Soviet armies were initially overwhelmed. German units encircled millions of Soviet soldiers, who, cut off from supplies and reinforcements, could only surrender.  
  
  
  
  
  
  
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As the German army advanced deep into Soviet territory, the SS and SD followed the troops. The first to arrive were tasked with identifying and eliminating persons who might organize and implement resistance to the German occupation forces, identifying and concentrating groups of people who were "hostile" to German rule in the East. Often known as mobile killing units, the SS and SD groups initiated mass-murder operations, primarily against Jewish males, officials of the Communist Party, and gypsies. The Germans established ghettos and other holding facilities to concentrate large numbers of Soviet Jews. Beginning in late July, German authorities began to physically annihilate entire Jewish communities in the Soviet Union. Success both on the military front and in the murder of the Soviet Jews contributed to Hitler's decision to deport German Jews to the occupied Soviet Union beginning on October 15, 1941, initiating what would become "Final Solution" policy: the physical annihilation of the all European Jews.

Despite catastrophic losses in the first 6 weeks of the war, the Soviet Union failed to collapse as anticipated by the Nazi leadership. In August 1941, Soviet resistance stiffened, knocking the Germans off their original plans. Nevertheless, by late September 1941, German forces reached the gates of Leningrad in the north. They took Smolensk in the center and Dnepropetrovsk in Ukraine. They spilled into the Crimean Peninsula in the south. German units reached the outskirts of Moscow in early December. Yet after months of campaigning, the German army was exhausted. Having expected a rapid Soviet collapse, German planners had failed to equip their troops for winter warfare. Expecting their military personnel to live off the land of a conquered Soviet Union at the expense of the indigenous population, German planners had failed to provide sufficient food and medicines. Worse still, German troops, advancing rapidly, outran their supply lines. They became vulnerable to Soviet counterattack along the 1,000 mile stretch from Berlin to Moscow.  
  
 On December 6, 1941, the USSR launched a major counterattack against the center of the front, driving the Germans back from Moscow in chaos. Only weeks later were the Germans able to stabilize their front. In the summer of 1942, Germany resumed the offensive with a massive attack to the south and southeast toward the city of Stalingrad (Volgograd) on the Volga River and toward the oil fields of the Caucasus. As the Germans reached the outskirts of Stalingrad and the Caucasus, German domination of Europe reached its furthest geographical extension.

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