

World War II

1 Road to War

The defeated countries in the First World War believed that they had been treated unfairly by the terms of the

Paris Peace Treaties and wanted to take up arms again to reorganize the balance.

The **League of Nations** was set up with the intention of solving international quarrels peacefully and preventing another war, but it was not powerful enough and failed several times.

The aims and actions of **Adolf Hitler**:

- To change the agreements reached at Versailles and regain the lost German lands.
- To create a **Greater Germany**, which would include all ethnic Germans.
- To win new territories in the east for the German population to expand into (*lebensraum*).

(German and Italian expansionism can be found at Unit 8) The policy of **appeasement** followed by Britain and France made Hitler think he could do everything he wanted.

Hitler signed a **secret pact of Non-Aggression** with the Soviet Union. It was supposed to last for 10 years and it included clauses for the splitting of Poland and a Soviet takeover of the Baltic States.

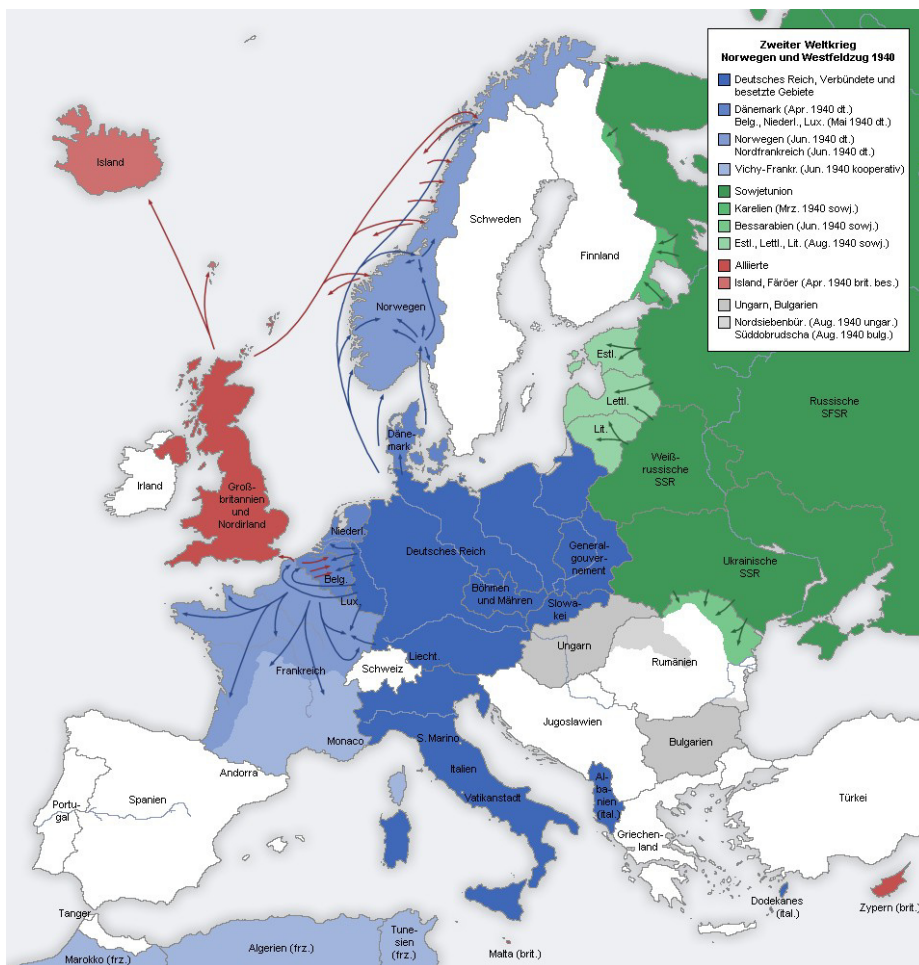
- 1st of September 1939 - Germany invaded Poland.
- Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany.



[Imperial War Museums](#). [Munich Agreement](#) (

Dominio público)

2The German offensive



[San Jose. Second World War Europe 1940 \(CC BY-SA\)](#)

2.1 The Western Front

Poland was defeated rapidly because of the German's **Blitzkrieg*** method of warfare.

The next six months are called the **Phoney war** because nothing happened. France and Britain were waiting for Hitler's next move and he was waiting to see if they would make peace, so the Germans planned an offensive in the west.

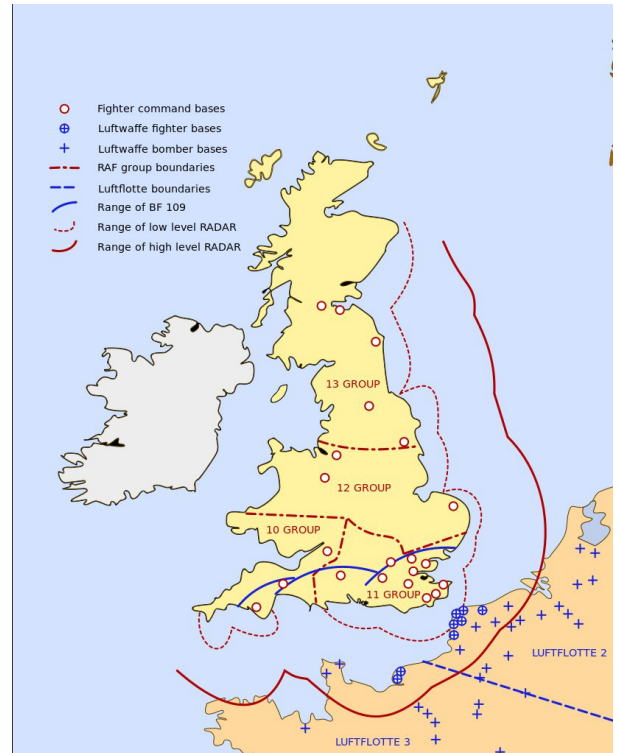
In April Germany invaded **Denmark and Norway**.

In May Germany conquered **Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France**. German troops marched into Paris and took direct control of most of the country. The government ruled by General Petain escaped to the south (Vichy) trying to govern but under Hitler's supervision (puppet government).



[Recuerdos de Pandora. Hitler in Paris](#)

(CC BY-SA)



[Hohum. Battle of Britain map](#) Hohum. [Battle of Britain](#) (Dominio público)

After this, in Britain the Prime Minister Chamberlain was replaced by Winston Churchill_(1940).

Because of the superiority of the English Navy, Germany's first plan of attack was to destroy the RAF by attacking the British Air Force before Germany could cross the English Channel. This plan led to the **Battle of Britain** (August and September 1940) and Britain won the Battle.

Now the Germans decided to bomb British cities. They hoped to break British morale and force the government to make peace.

2.2 The Balkans and North Africa

Hitler needed oil supplies from **Romania** so he forced them to support Germany in the war. He also forced **Hungary** and **Bulgaria** to support him as well.

Meanwhile **Italy** had invaded **Greece** but were defeated and needed help from Germany. Germany also invaded **Yugoslavia**.

German and Italian forces were also fighting in **North Africa** in an attempt to invade Egypt

(British) to take the **Suez Canal** and cut off British oil supplies to force them to surrender.

Hitler sent German forces led by Rommel, the African Korps. Allied forces led by British General Montgomery, won the battle at El Alamein(Oct/Nov 1942). This was the first serious setback (defeat) that Hitler suffered.

Soon the Allied troops led by U.S. General Eisenhower landed in Algeria and Sicily was invaded (July 1943) and then **Mussolini was overthrown** and the new government declared war on Germany. Then German forces were sent to Italy and organized resistance until May 1945.



Axis / fascist occupation and partition of Yugoslavia in World War II (as of 1941)

- Internationally recognized borders
- Illegal Axis / fascist borders in occupied Yugoslavia
- Independent State of Croatia (German and Italian occupation)
- Serbia (German occupation)
- Banat, region with special status within Serbia (German occupation and local German administration)
- Montenegro (Italian occupation)
- Occupied and annexed by Bulgaria
- Occupied and annexed by Nazi Germany
- Occupied and annexed by Italy
- Occupied and annexed by Italy (As a part of Italian protectorate of Albania)
- Occupied and annexed by Hungary

Note: Some scholars are suggesting that term "fascist" is not a proper description for all countries that participated in occupation of Yugoslavia. Other scholars (including those from former Yugoslavia) are using this term as a description for all these countries.



[Panonian. Balkans occupation](#) (Dominio público)

Bundesarchiv. [Erwin Rommel](#) (CC BY-SA)

2.3 The Russian Front

Hitler planned to attack the USSR for several reasons:

- He wanted **living space** for the “natural development” of the German people (lebensraum)
- He wanted to **destroy the Communist** system.
- He wanted **resources** such as oil and grain.
- He wanted to use the Slav peoples as slave labours.

The German invasion of the USSR, named **Operation Barbarossa**, began on 22nd June 1941. Hitler had planned three attacks on the major cities of the USSR (Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad). The German forces made a rapid and massive advance into the USSR. Most of the soviet air force was destroyed on the ground, and over 700,000 soviet troops were captured.



SIC. Eastern Front 1941-06 to 1941-12 (CC BY-SA)

3 Nazi defeat

In the USSR, the German defeat came once they attacked Stalingrad (Volgograd) in spring of 1942. The Soviets practiced the scorched-earth policy. After a long battle (until February 1943) it was the definitive Soviet victory over the Germans, who had to retreat from the USSR.

After the German defeat in Stalingrad (USSR) the front moved westwards and Germany began to be massively bombed. Leningrad was liberated in January 1944. The **Red Army** kept fighting and gradually forced the Germans back but at **great cost**. Twenty million Soviets died and 75% of the German forces were lost, allowing time for Britain and the USA to build up forces and to prepare an attack in the west.



After 1942 German forces were retreating and Italian forces were completely defeated.

D – Day landings took place on the 6th June - 1944, with US General Eisenhower in command. One million allied troops landed on five Normandy beaches in ten days. At the same time, the Soviet Union started a massive offensive to prevent Hitler transferring German forces to the West.

Paris was liberated in August. In December 1944, the Battle of the Bulge, the last German offensive, slowed the allied advance but it was quickly defeated. In April 1945 allied advances continued and the Russians attacked Berlin from the East.

Finally Adolf Hitler committed suicide on the 30th April 1945. On the 7th of May Nazi Germany surrendered to the Allies.

4 The war in Asia

It began later than in Europe. Japan was a major and growing industrial power. Japan controlled Korea (1905) and Manchuria (1931). Japan signed a treaty with Hitler (1936) and started the invasion of China (1937).



[Charles H. Alston](#), *Remember Pearl Harbor poster* (Dominio público)

Japan continued its expansion and by 1941 it controlled large parts of Eastern China. They wanted to invade the French colony of Indo-China because the Japanese needed supplies such as coal, rubber, oil and other raw materials.

The USA, worried by the Japanese expansion, had banned trade with Japan. This embargo deprived Japan of 80% of its oil supplies (1941). A Japanese surprise attack against the USA would allow the conquest of South East Asia and the Pacific before the USA had recovered. This was the reason for the attack on Pearl Harbour, the big US Naval Base in Hawaii (7th December 1941), ordered by the Japanese commander General Tojo. The results of this were:

- Over 2,400 men were killed and many more were injured.
- The battleships were sunk but the aircraft carriers were at sea so the attack missed the main fuel supplies of the base.
- Immediately after the attack, the USA (Roosevelt) and Britain (Churchill) declared war on Japan.
- Germany declared war on the USA in support of Japan.

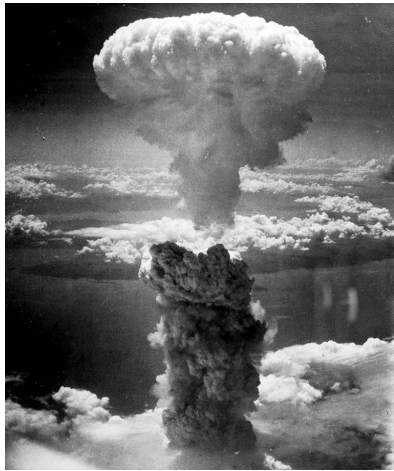
Within months Japan occupied large areas of the Philippines, the Dutch East Indies, Singapore, Malaya and parts of Burma. The main factors of these success were: surprise attacks, good equipment, well-trained pilots and a very large army and navy.

The turning point of the war was the Battle of Midway: the US sunk all four Japanese aircraft carriers (June 1942) and shot down 300 planes. Japanese naval supremacy in the region ended. Australian forces defeated the Japanese in New Guinea.

Japanese forces defended bravely as the Allies used a tactic of *island-hopping* in the Pacific.

During the battle of Iwo Jima the Japanese fought to the *last man*.

Kamikaze pilots trained to die *with honour*, flew suicide missions in explosive-filled planes to destroy as many allied targets as they could.



[Kamikaze about to crash](#) (Dominio público)



Charles Levy. [Atomic Bombing of Nagasaki](#) (Dominio público)

The new US president, Truman, had a choice between invading Japan and suffering huge losses of soldiers, or using a new secret weapon, the atomic bomb, to try to end the war. Two atomic bombs were dropped in August 1945: the first one on Hiroshima (6 – August) that killed 70,000 people; the second one on Nagasaki (8 – August) killed 36,000. The radiation killed a lot of people and it continued to kill them right through the twentieth century when many deformed babies were born.

On the 14th of August 1945 Japan surrendered unconditionally. The Second World War was over

5 Occupation and resistance

- Over 750 million people lived in countries occupied by German or Japanese forces, that controlled laws, government and took the food, supplies and machinery.
- Populations were forced to collaborate with the occupying forces. Some people collaborated because they wanted better treatment or more food.
- There were active resistance movements in many areas; for example in France or the partisans in Yugoslavia.

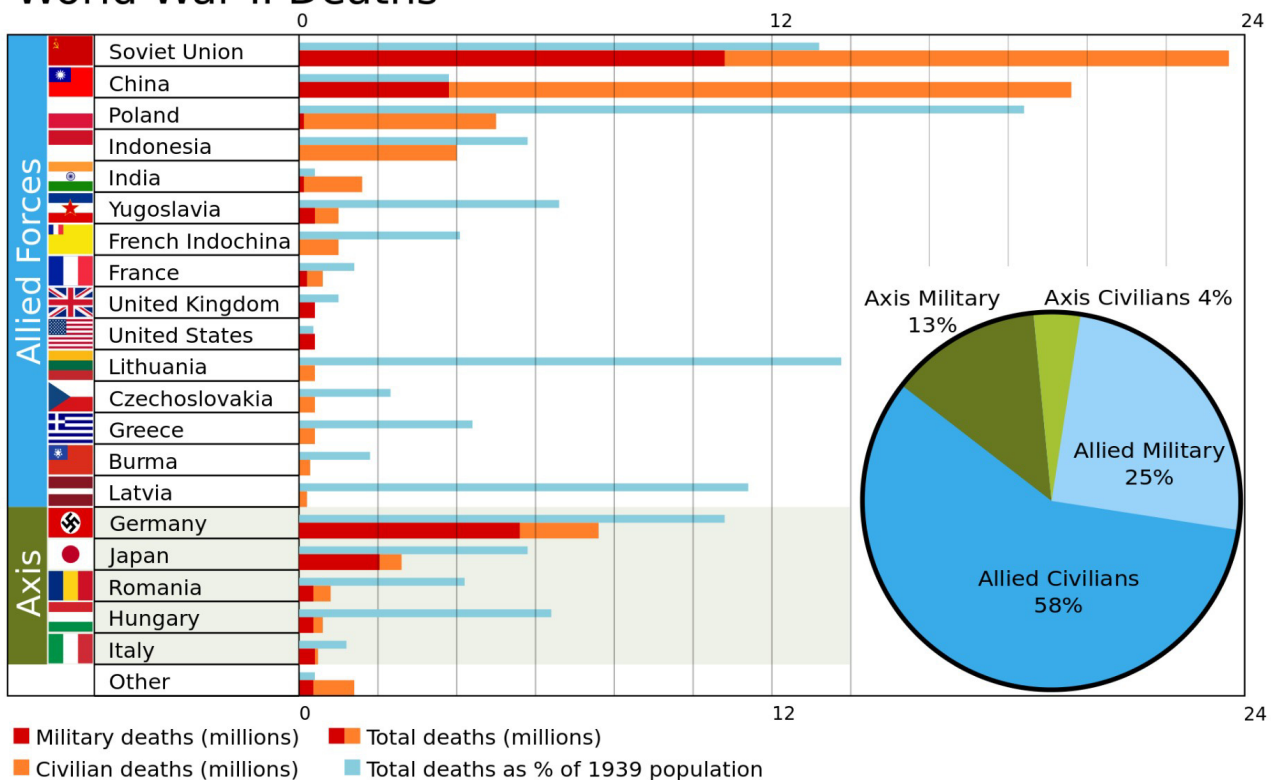
Both sides used Prison Camps:

- In Eastern Europe over 4 million soviets were tortured, frozen and starved to death.
- In Asia, many Chinese and Korean people were removed from their homes and used for slave force by the Japanese.

In Allied countries there were internment camps for foreign nationals

6 Casualties

World War II Deaths



7 The aftermath

- **Germany was divided** into two parts: East (Communist East Germany) and West (German Democratic Republic), and the capital, Berlin was also divided.
- Europe was divided into the Communist Eastern Block and the Western Nations, with the “*iron curtain*” dividing them (a phrase coined by Winston Churchill)
- The League of Nations was replaced by the **United Nations**.
- The USA organised massive aid for Europe and Japan to rebuild (the **Marshall Plan**).
- In 1949 some Western nations formed **NATO** (North Atlantic Treaty Organisation). The USSR viewed this was a threat and formed the **Warsaw Pact** in 1955.
- European countries had **massive debts**, industry was out of date and countries like Britain lost overseas markets and colonies.
- The political leaders now would be the **USA and the USSR**. Some people (in Europe) started to see the need of a unification of Europe.
- Rationing system was established: people had **ration books** containing coupons which could be exchanged for certain amounts of food such as sugar, butter, eggs, meat...
- Relations between the USA and the USSR were tense and gave way to something called the Cold War; because there was not any fighting, instead both sides tried to be stronger forming alliances and making plans.
- The Allies agreed to legal trials at Nuremberg of Nazi leaders for war crimes.

8 The Holocaust

The Holocaust also known as the Shoah , was a genocide in which Adolf Hitler's Nazi Germany and its collaborators killed about six million Jews. The victims included 1.5 million children and represented about two-thirds of the nine million Jews who had resided in Europe.

From 1941 to 1945, Jews were systematically murdered in the deadliest genocide in history, which was part of a broader aggregate of acts of oppression and killings of various ethnic and political groups in Europe by the Nazi regime. Under the coordination of the SS, following directions from the highest leadership of the Nazi Party, every arm of Germany's bureaucracy was involved in the logistics and the carrying out of the genocide.

Other victims of Nazi crimes included ethnic Poles, Soviet citizens, other Slavs, Romanis, communists, homosexuals, Freemasons, Jehovah's Witnesses and the mentally and physically disabled.

The persecution and genocide were carried out in stages, culminating in what Nazis termed the "Final Solution to the Jewish Question", an agenda to exterminate Jews in Europe. Initially the German government passed laws to exclude Jews from civil society, most prominently the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. Nazis established a network of concentration camps starting in 1933 and ghettos following the outbreak of World War II in 1939. In 1941, as Germany conquered new territory in eastern Europe, specialized paramilitary units murdered around two million Jews, partisans, and others often in mass shootings.

By the end of 1942, victims were being regularly transported by freight trains to extermination camps where, if they survived the journey, most were systematically killed in gas chambers. This continued until the end of World War II in Europe in April–May 1945.



[Matalea. Holocaust map \(CC BY-SA\)](#)

Webgrafía

“CPI Tino Grandío Bilingual Sections: Social Studies ESO-4”, , fecha de consulta 2 noviembre 2016, en <http://seccionsociais.blogspot.com.es/p/social-studies-eso-4.html>.

"Prof. Jorge E. de la Peña" "History I. From Enlightenment to WWI.pdf", *Google Docs*, fecha de consulta 18 octubre 2016, en https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bwe1dU-54DkeZXRIVVI0X19xdkk/edit?pli=1&usp=embed_facebook.

“The Holocaust - Wikipedia”, , fecha de consulta 8 noviembre 2016, en https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Holocaust.

Licenciado baixo a [Licenza Creative Commons Recoñecemento Compartir igual 4.0](#)