

Nazi-Soviet Nonaggression Pact

Soviet Dictator Josef Stalin signed a 10-year nonaggression pact with Hitler on August 23. After being excluded from the Munich conference, Stalin was not eager to join with the West. Also, Hitler was promising him territory. In the public part of the pact, Germany and the Soviet Union promised not to attack each other. Secretly, however, they agreed that they would divide Poland between them. They also secretly agreed that the USSR could take over Finland and the Baltic countries (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia).



“I wonder how long the Honeymoon will last?”

Blitzkrieg- Hitler's Experiment on Poland

Hitler quickly tries to conquer Poland. He sends 1.5 million soldiers along the Polish Border. This Polish invasion had unleashed World War II. Now, France and Great Britain declares War on Germany. Attack on Poland was a test of Germany's new war strategy called "**Blitzkrieg**" (Lightening war in German). It involved fast-moving aircrafts, tanks and infantry forces surprise attacking opposition with overwhelming force, and it had worked successfully on Poland.



France is Defeated

Hitler strikes through Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. This was a strategy to strike at France. By having allies focus on those countries, Hitler was able to send larger tanks, troops, and trucks through Ardennes forest in northeastern France and Luxembourg. From the northern border of Germany, and the Ardennes Forest Germany literally squeezed the Maginot line. Within ten days, Germany moves across the northern coast.

Troops in Belgium and the northeastern coast of France come together trapping the Allies' troops along Dunkirk on May 26th. Allies, literally on the edge of the cliff, are now trapped. With nowhere to go, Great Britain comes to the rescue the army throughout May 26th to June 4th. Eight hundred and fifty ships, yachts, lifeboats, paddle steamers, and motorboats brought back and forth battle worn soldiers from Dunkirk to Britain. However the rescue did not "save France".

On June 10th, Italy's Benito Mussolini seeking the victory of Hitler joins him and declares war. France was attacked from both South and North France. France is again squeezed and trapped. On June 22nd 1940 France surrenders.



Battle for Britain

Now only Great Britain is left to fight against Germany. Hitler's plan against Great Britain was the "Operation Sea Lion" – which was to knock out the Royal Air Force (RAF) first. German air craft (Luftwaffe) outnumbered RAF by 1,600 planes (2,900:4,500). Smart guy Hitler started attacking the airfields and air craft factories first. Although Great Britain only had two thirds of what Germany had, their two secret weapons brought them victory; "Radar", which measured the speed and distance of other aircrafts, and "Enigma", which was a secret message opener. By using these weapons they were able to predict Hitler's plans.

Now, Hitler, seeing himself starting to lose, starts night bombing- so they could do away with the RAF- however the RAF was still powerful enough to make Hitler call off the attacks.

The Battle of Britain ended on May 10th of 1941. It was important to Europe because for the first time, it proved that Hitler could be blocked.



Enigma Machine



Radar

First Up... North Africa

The resistance against Germany made Hitler move on with his plan with Europe. He would come back to Britain later and move on to invading the Eastern Fronts and the Mediterranean region. Germany first decided to invade the northern part of Africa because of their ally Italy. In the beginning of the war Italy was neutral, but then Mussolini thought that if they didn't get into the action then, they wouldn't get the share of lands that Germany had won. So Italy attacks the Northern part of Africa wanting to get the British controlled Egypt. Egypt's Suez Canal was key to reaching the oil fields of the Middle East. Within a week, Italian troops had pushed 60 miles inside Egypt, forcing British units back. Then both sides dug in and waited.

Then at last, the British attacked and won over the Italians. The British had 130,000 Italian prisoners and had gone 500 miles across the land of North Africa. Hitler couldn't just watch his Afrika Korps. Rommel had the confidence to take control of the Suez Canal, so he attacked the British in Agheila. This was a surprise attack, which forced the British to retreat 500 miles towards Tobruk. But this victory didn't last long because the British drove the Italians back to where they had begun. This also did not last long, because Rommel again pushed the British back towards Tobruk. This was a shattering loss for the Allies. Rommel later wrote, "To every man of us, Tobruk was a symbol of British resistance, and we were not going to finish with it for good."



Erwin Rommel, known as the "Desert Fox"

Operation Barbarossa

Hitler was ready to attack the Soviet Union with his plan called **Operation Barbarossa**. The Germans rolled into the Soviet Union with their tanks and airplanes which began the beginning of the blitzkrieg invasion. The Soviets were not ready to fight against the Germans. Even though the Soviets had a large amount of soldiers, they were not equipped and were not trained to fight. After about a week, the Germans had pushed 500 miles inside the Soviet Union. While walking through the lands of the Soviets, the Germans killed and burned anything that was in their pathway. Then, by early September, the Germans had the city Leningrad captive and made sure that no one could get out of the city. Hitler made the people starve by bombing all of the warehouses. The people of Leningrad ate the cow and horse food, and ate cats, dogs, and even crows and rats. About a million people died that winter in Leningrad, but the city still didn't fall to the Germans.

Hitler saw that Leningrad would not fall easily, so he diverted his attention and forces to the Soviet capital, Moscow, and began to attack. By the next winter, the Germans were in the capital, but the Soviet General Zhukov attacked back. Zhukov had 100 Siberian divisions and the bad winters were there to back him up. When the temperatures had fallen, the Germans could not adapt, because they only had their summer uniforms. The Germans ended up having useless weapons, tanks, trucks, and frozen oil and fuel. That winter, Moscow was saved from the Germans and the Germans lost 500,000 lives.

