



The Second World War and Victory in Europe Day

1939

In 1939, Europe looked like this map on the right.

After the First World War 1914 – 1918, lots of people just wanted peace but some people didn't. They didn't like the new Europe or peace and they wanted another war.



During the 1930s, Adolf Hitler was elected to be in charge of Germany. He wanted Germany to be the most powerful country in Europe and he started to plan for war. This included having big military parades to show how strong Germany was. The German government were called the National Socialist German Workers' Party (Nazis).



At the start of September 1939, Germany invaded the country of Poland with its Air Force and its Army.

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GERMANS INVADE AND BOMB POLAND BRITAIN MOBILISES

*Warsaw, Cracow, Nine Other Towns
Bombed: Danzig is "Annexed"*

FRANCE DECLARES "STATE OF SIEGE"

GERMANY INVADED POLAND TO-DAY. COMPLETE
MOBILISATION HAS BEEN ORDERED IN BRITAIN.

Orders in Council for the complete mobilisation of the Navy, Army and Air Force were signed by the King at a Privy Council to-day. The King also approved other Orders in Council dealing with the emergency.

Warsaw has been bombed. Other German aircraft raided Kursk, Gdynia, Thorn, Bialystock, Grodno, Dabikó and Bydgoszcz. A few hours later, Cracow, Katowice and Czenstowice were bombed.

THE EVENING STANDARD LEARNS THAT THE POLISH AMBASSADOR SAW

'BRITAIN WILL FULFIL HER OBLIGATIONS'

Parliament Meeting
Tonight

THE BRITISH CABINET MET
TO-DAY. THEY BROKE UP
AFTER ONE HOUR AND FIFTY

Other countries respond

- Britain and France were both allies of Poland and had promised to help protect it. All three countries had promised to protect each other.
- Britain and France declared that they were at war with Germany to try and stop it from doing more damage in Poland but it was too late and Germany took over half of Poland.



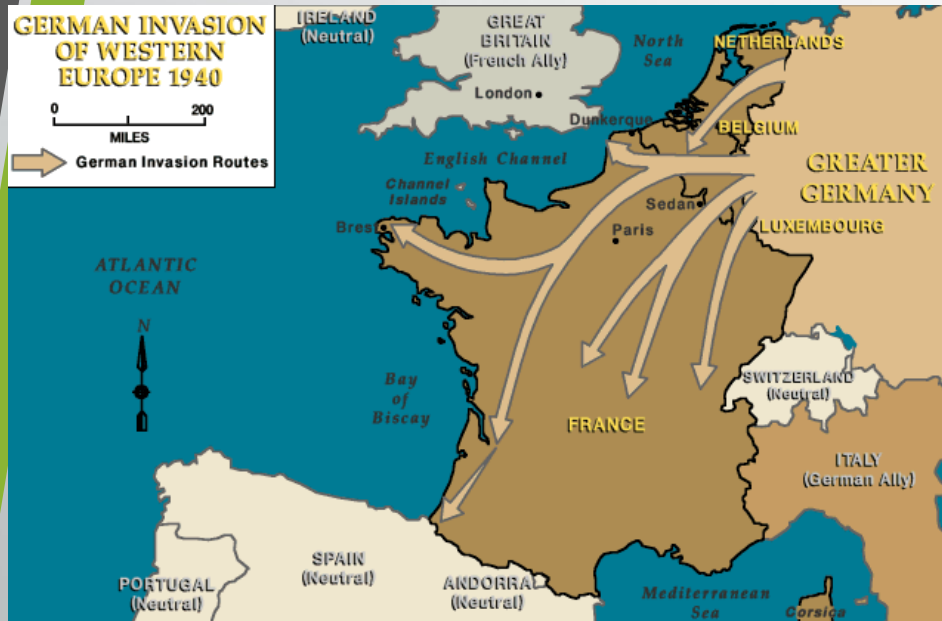
Britain got ready for war. Lots of children were evacuated to the countryside in case Nazi Germany attacked, just as it had in Poland.

British Troops were sent to France to help their allies.

Now all men in Britain, aged 18 to 41, had to join the forces unless they were in special jobs (e.g. miners, and doctors) and women would also have to join up to be in the forces.



April 1940



- In April 1940, Germany attacked most of the countries in Western Europe.
- This included countries that were neutral (had agreed not to go to war and did not have very big armies).
- None of the countries were able to stop the German air force and its army.

British troops

- The British troops in France had to try and get back to Britain very quickly and they were rescued by the Royal Navy and lots of small British fishing boats in something called the Dunkirk evacuation. This has recently been made into a film.
- Britain also brought some of the French forces with them and they would stay in Britain ready to fight in the future.



In July 1940 Nazi Germany planned to attack Britain



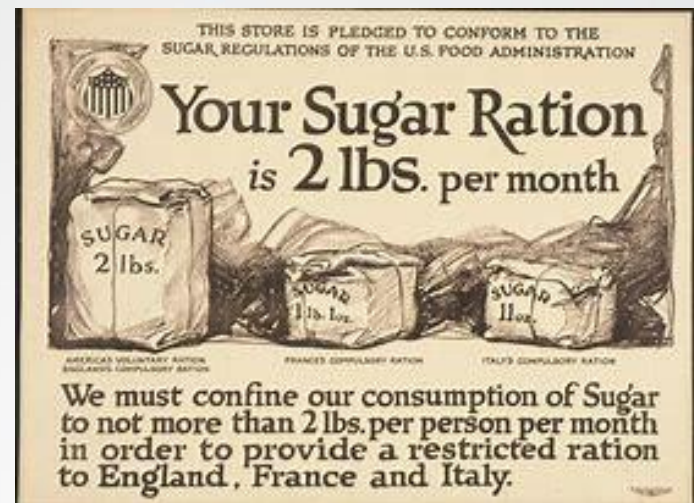


- Men and women of the Royal Air Force had to stop the invasion.
- It was called the Battle of Britain.
- As well as pilots from Britain, lots of pilots from the other European countries, who had been beaten by Germany, went to Britain to help fight in the air battle.

- The Battle of Britain started 10 July 1940 and didn't finish until September 1940 – hundreds of people were killed but they RAF managed to stop the Germans from invading Britain.
- Germany now began to bomb British cities and towns to try and force the people to give up. This major bombing event is known as The Blitz.



- Life in Britain became very hard.
- Children were often sent to live away from the cities – as evacuees.
- Food and clothes were all rationed – that meant you were only allowed to have certain things and only a certain amount.
- Sweets were rationed and became quite rare.



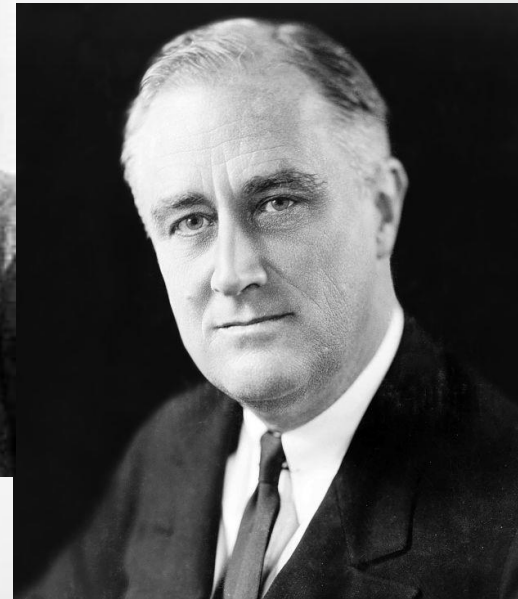
- In the countries that were occupied by Nazi Germany (taken over by force and commandeered by Germany) life was even harder. Cities were destroyed and people could be put in prison for very little reason.



- In summer 1941, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union in the Eastern Part of Europe.
- In December 1941, Japan, an ally of Germany, attacked the United States of America at Pearl Harbor.
- 6 months later, The Battle of Midway took place in the Pacific. This was the American counter-attack. They were now absolutely involved in World War II.



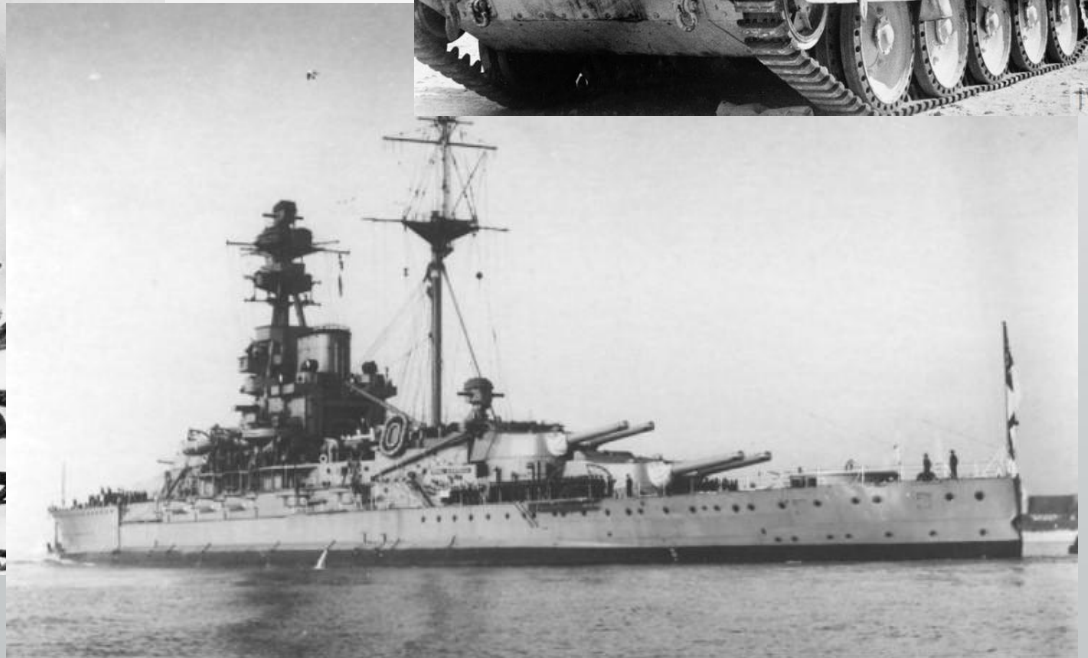
- Britain, led by Winston Churchill (top), United States of America led by F.D. Roosevelt (middle) and The USSR – Soviet Union led by Joseph Stalin (bottom) all agreed to work together to stop Nazi Germany, Japan and their allies and to free the countries that they had invaded.



World War II in Europe 1939–1941



- Over the next few years, the fighting would take place all over the world by land, by sea and by air. Many people were killed and injured.



HMS Royal Sovereign (Courtesy: Maritime Quest)



On the Home Front

- At home in Britain, lots of people were involved with war work. This included working in ammunition factories, joining the land army so that people could eat and agreeing to restrictions on what they could and couldn't do.
- British towns and cities were still being bombed – this is Coventry cathedral after it had been hit by a bomb.



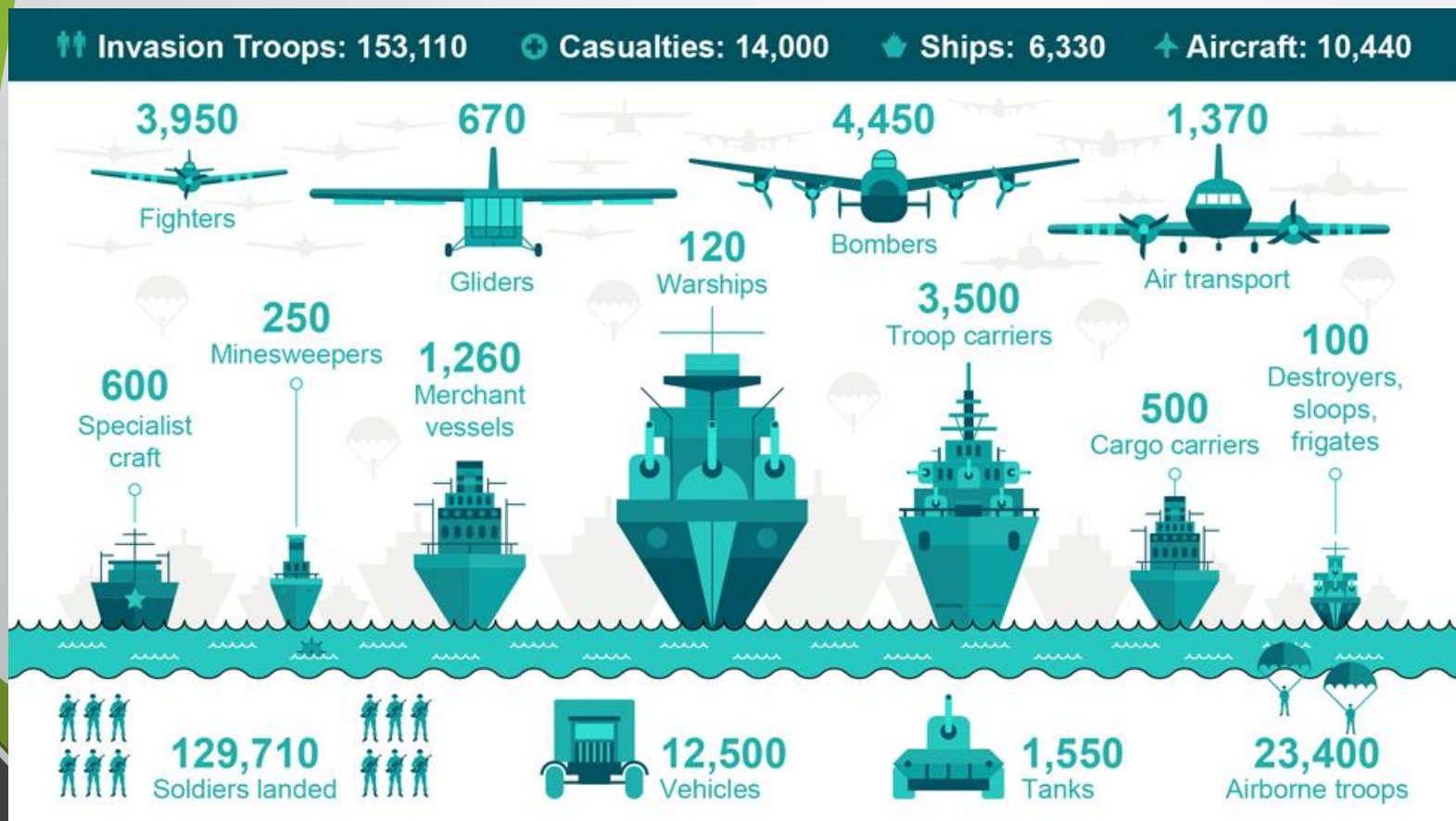
- In 1944, Britain and her allies began to turn the war and battle in South East Asia. These initial battles were successful.

1944

- The Allies were able to attack Italy and then land an invasion into France to defeat the Germans there and to start to liberate the people in those countries. This event was known as D-Day.



The D-Day invasion was the largest amphibious invasion in history. Britain, The United States, Canada and France led the attack and they were supported by troops from all over the world. These included free Polish troops and those from other occupied countries.



- The Allied troops continued to fight the German forces across Europe from the East and the West.

1945



- The Allied leaders met at a place called Yalta and agreed to ensure that the countries of Europe freed from Germany could be free and hold elections.
- They also agreed that the total defeat of Germany was necessary and that allied occupation of Germany was also necessary.



- In April, the Allied forces were fighting in Germany itself.

April and May 1945

- The German leader, Adolf Hitler, refused to surrender and instead took his own life.

- Eventually, the German generals agreed to surrender and to stop fighting.

- The next day, it was announced that the war in Europe was over.

8 May 1945 became Victory in Europe Day (VE Day)



VE Day celebrations



The British Channel Islands were formally liberated on VE Day, 8th May 1945



VE Day celebrations



Children out celebrating at VE Day parties



The Royal family and Prime Minister Winston Churchill on the Balcony of Buckingham Palace



VE Day parties often took place in the streets



The Telegraph



After VE Day...

- Rationing would still continue.
- Men would still have to serve in the forces.
- Restrictions would still be in place.
- But no one needed worry about fighting or being bombed anymore in Europe.
- It would be another 3 months until the war finished totally when Japan surrendered.