

World War II

TOWARD A GLOBAL COMMUNITY (1900 – PRESENT)



- WWII began on September 1, 1939 when Germany invaded Poland.
- The Germans used a strategy known as blitzkrieg (*lightening war*), which involved coordinated airstrikes and fast moving tanks and infantry.
- Blitzkrieg was so successful that by the time Great Britain & France declared war on Germany (*September 3rd*) Poland was overrun.



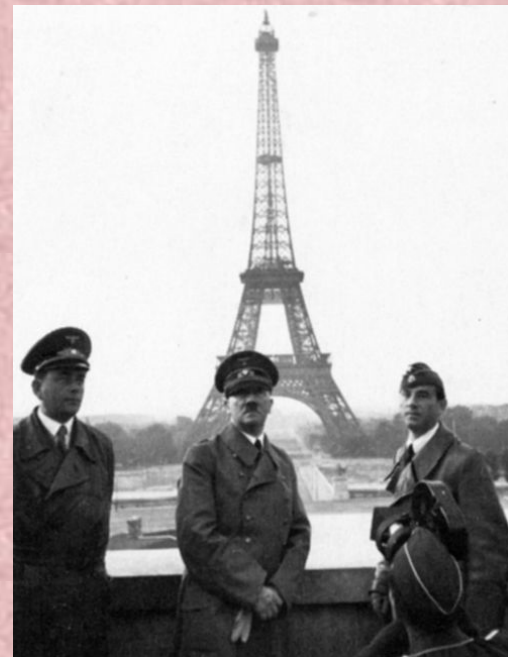
- The Soviets also invaded Poland taking over territory (It was later learned this was part of a deal they struck with Germany).



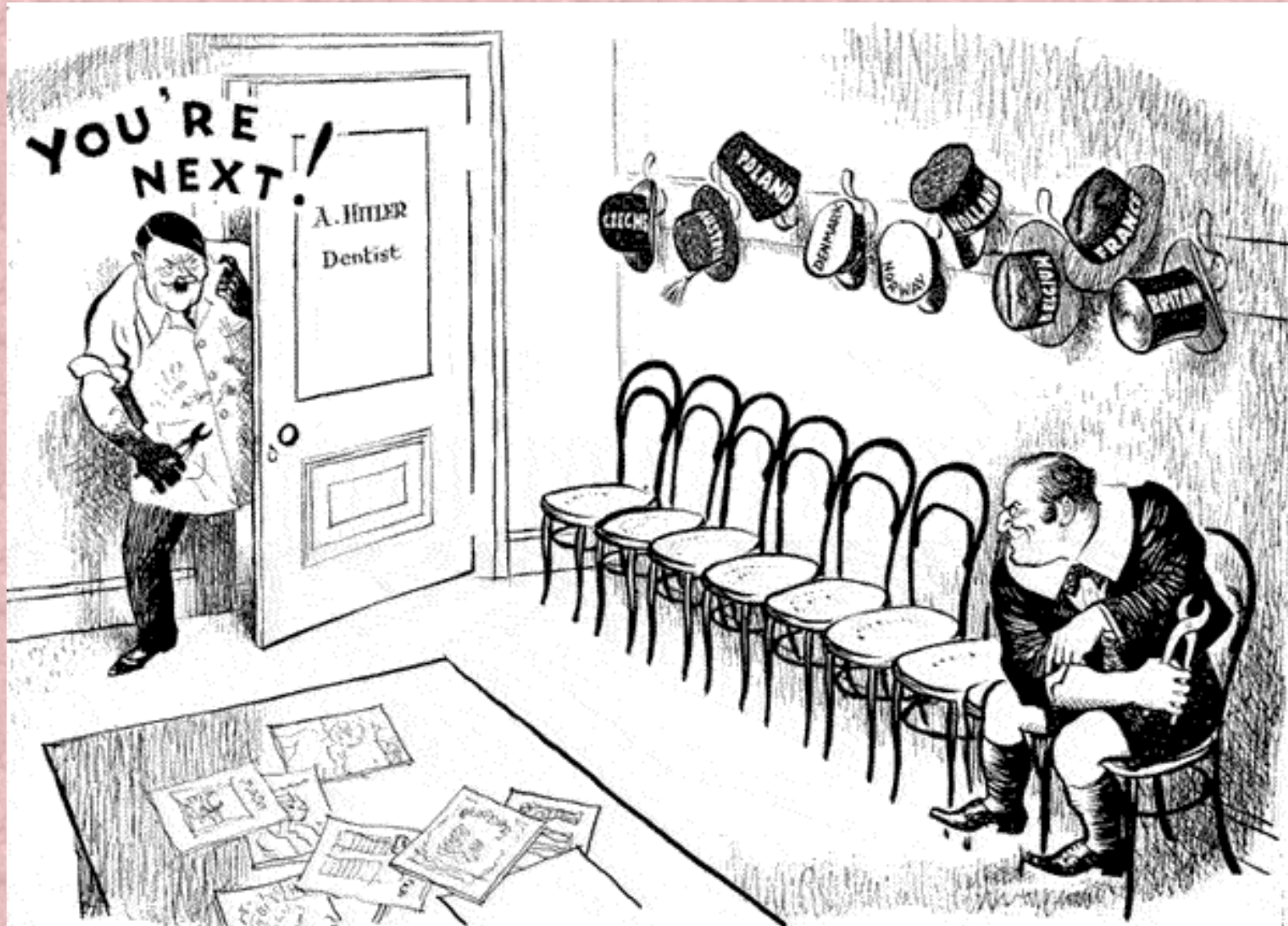
- For the next several months things remained quiet (Phony War) as British and French troops built fortifications along the German border.



- Despite France's fortifications, Germany's successful invasion of Belgium allowed the Nazis to simply go around them and attack France. Italy soon joined the side of the Germans.
- By the summer of 1940 France had fallen to the Nazis.



- Hitler then set his sights on Great Britain.



- During the late summer of 1940 Germany repeatedly bombed Great Britain (including London) which became known as the **Battle of Britain**.



- The British were able to fend off the German attacks using radar and their own air force. The British people also rallied around their prime minister Winston Churchill.

“We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing-grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills, we shall never surrender.”



**Winston
Churchill**



- In September of 1940, Japan, Germany, and Italy signed a mutual defense treaty to come to each other's aid in case of attack – creating the Axis Powers.
- Frustrated with the British campaign, Hitler decided to invade the Soviet Union (breaking his pact with Stalin). At first the Nazis looked to win, but they were halted at the **Battle of Stalingrad, 1941**. More than 1.1 million Russians died in the battle, more than the U.S. would lose in the entire war.



- Most Americans had no interest in getting involved in another war ([isolationism](#)), however under President FDR the Lend Lease Act was passed in early 1941 as a way of lending arms and supplies to Britain.
- On December 7, 1941 Pearl Harbor in Hawaii was attacked by the Japanese, as a result the U.S. would now become fully engaged in WWII.



- In contrast to WWI, the Second World War was a war of movement (ex: Blitzkrieg as opposed to trench warfare).
- Furthermore, WWII would be larger and fought on even more of a global scale. Generally, the war is often discussed as three theaters: North Africa, Europe, and the Pacific.



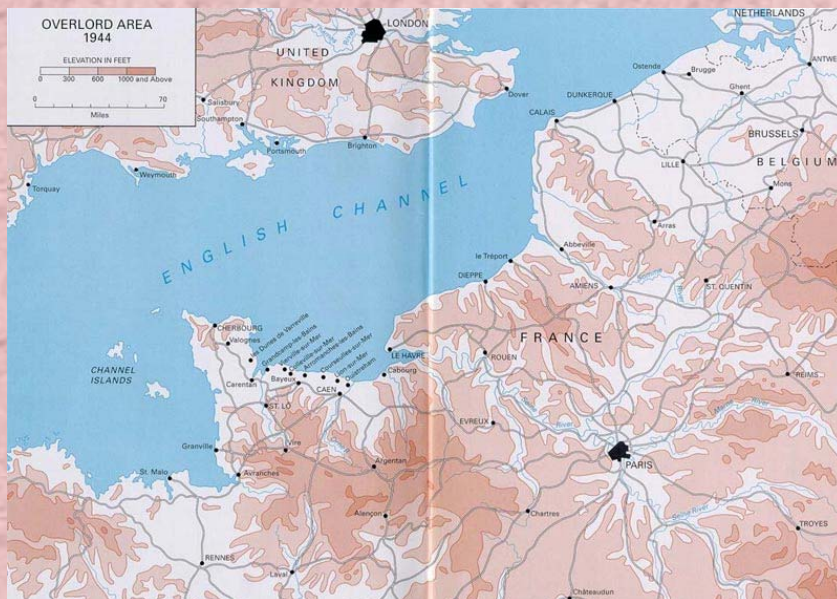
NORTH AFRICA

- Stalin pressed Churchill and FDR to open a second front in Europe against the Germans to relieve his soldiers in the East from taking the brunt of the Nazi forces. They disagreed causing tension amongst the three allies.
- Instead FDR and Churchill planned for an invasion into Axis controlled North Africa, which did not cause Hitler to relocate thousands of troops. The 1942 mission was called Operation Torch.



EUROPE

- After the Allies were victorious in North Africa and moved north through the Italian peninsula, (by the end of 1943 Italy would have to surrender) they then planned to invade France, thus creating a second front for Stalin.
- The **D-Day** operation took place on June 6, 1944.



- By December of 1944, the Allies were fighting the Germans at the Battle of the Bulge, the Nazi's last-ditch offensive in the war.
- In general, the Germans were being squeezed out of the war by the British and Americans in the west and the Soviets in the east.



- As Allied troops marched into Germany they came across concentration camps where millions of Jews and other persecuted people had been imprisoned, tortured, & mass murdered.



- HOW? Hitler over time escalated his harsh treatment to Jews. (*ex: blame, ghettos, Final Solution*). Furthermore, anti-Semitism existed throughout Europe.



THE PACIFIC

- Although the Allies had focused on defeating Hitler first, a war against the Japanese who by 1942 controlled S.E. Asia and much of the Pacific.
- The American objective was called “island hopping” – take back island after island the Japanese had invaded.



- At the **Battle of Midway** in June 1942 the Americans were able to surprise hit Japanese aircraft carriers. Unlike the U.S. Japan's war production capabilities were limited and the battle signaled a turning point for them.
- The Japanese began a new tactic, the use of kamikazes or suicide planes.



- In February of 1945, the 3 Allies met to discuss plans for post-war Europe (Yalta Conference).
- By April Hitler committed suicide, Mussolini was killed, and on May 8th the war in Europe was officially over. *However, in April FDR also died.*

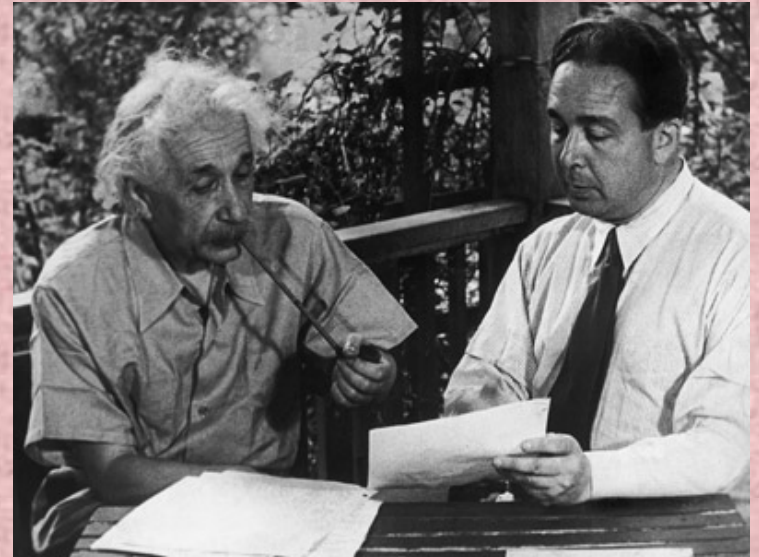


- Throughout the island hopping campaign warfare was exceptionally brutal. The desire to defend their homeland to the death indicated to the U.S. government that a full on invasion into Japan would probably cost a million American lives. Example: After a month of fighting in Okinawa more than 7,600 American men died and 110,000 Japanese were killed.
- As a result, President Truman ordered the dropping of two atomic bombs on Hiroshima & Nagasaki, Japan (within seconds tens of thousands of people died instantly).
- On September 2, 1945 Japan surrendered ending WWII.



WARFARE

- WWII caused 60 million deaths, half of which were civilians (1/3 were from the Soviet Union). Millions of refugees were without homes.
- The targeting of civilians was carried out by both the Axis & Allied Powers (ex: Germans bombing Britain, Allies bombing Dresden, U.S. dropping fire bombs on Japanese cities).
- Scientists played a role (physicists perfected radar and developed the atomic bomb, & cryptanalysts broke enemy codes).

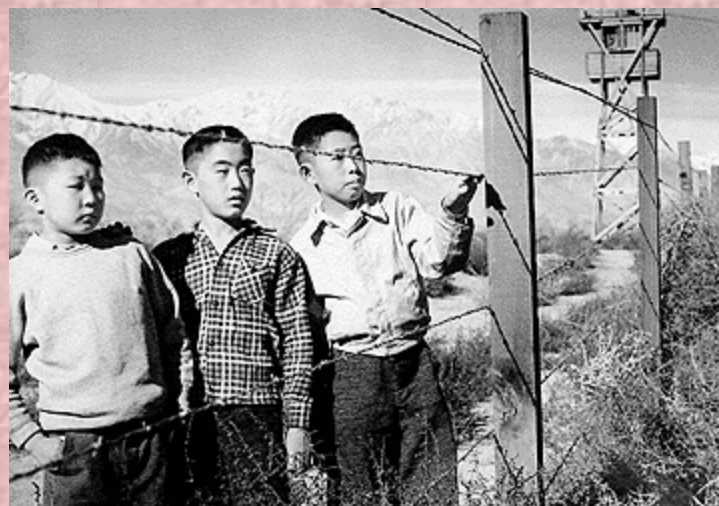


THE HOMEFRONT

- All sides of the war understood that production was essential to winning the war. As a result . . .
 - Women found jobs building planes and other machinery (in the US they made up about 1/3 of the workforce, percentages were even higher in Britain & the USSR).
 - Private companies went from producing consumer goods to war related items (ex: Ford Motor Company).
 - Production facilities were specifically targeted during bombing raids.
 - Armies in Europe & Asia raided towns for food & supplies.
 - The enlistment of men in the military and in factories helped end the Great Depression.



- In the U.S. the economy soared due to massive war production thus ending the Great Depression. By 1944, the U.S. was producing twice as much as all the Axis Powers combined.
- African Americans and Latinos found employment. However, Japanese-Americans were often viewed as the enemy, and along the West Coast they were rounded up and put in internment camps.



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- Nazi Germany quickly seized territory in Europe (Belgium, France, etc.), but was halted when it attacked Britain. It then turned on the Soviet Union causing there to be two fronts in the European war.
- Japan was successful in expanding its Pacific empire, but was eventually rolled back by American forces.
- The Allies (Britain, U.S.S.R., U.S.) defeat the Axis Powers (Germany, Italy, Japan).
- WWII saw the targeting of civilians, the Holocaust, atomic weapons, fighter planes, and home fronts affected worldwide.
- By the end of WWII China erupted into a civil war between the Guomindang (Nationalists) and Mao Zedong's communists; the Peoples' Republic was formed in 1949.