

Gray

## World War II Chronology of Events

- Sept 1, 1939 - Germany invades Poland
- Blitzkrieg - "lightning war"
  - rapid, intense, mobile, concentrated attack intended to knock out the enemy quickly
  - use of massed tanks and air power
- Sept 3, 1939 - Great Britain and France declare war on Germany
- Sept 1939 - Soviet Union invades Poland from the east
- Oct 1939 - Apr 1940 - The "Phony War"
- Britain and France mass troops on Germany's western border but neither side attacks
- Nov 1939 - Russia attacks Finland
- Finns give fierce resistance but give up in March 1940
  - Hitler notes the poor performance of the Soviet army
- Apr 1940 - Germany invades Norway and Denmark
- gives Germany better access to the sea -- naval power
- May 1940 - Germany invades the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg
- May - June 1940 - Germany invades France
- goes around the Maginot Line
  - pushes the British back and corners the British army at Dunkirk
  - Dunkirk evacuation -- British army escapes by small boats to England. They are able to fight again in the future.
- June 1940 - Italy declares war and attacks France
- June 1940 - France surrenders. France is divided into 2 zones:
- one occupied and governed by the Germans
  - the other, southern France, not occupied by the Germans. Its government, called the Vichy Government, collaborated or cooperated with the Germans.

Summer 1940 - The American Lend-Lease Plan

- As part of its isolationism policy, in the 1930's, the USA passed the Neutrality Acts. These said:
  - Americans were not permitted to sell military equipment or lend money to countries at war.
  - Non-military supplies could be sold to countries at war but only if:
    - they paid cash for them
    - they picked up the supplies in their own ships

- Lend-Lease Plan - President Roosevelt had Congress suspend the Neutrality Acts
  - The Americans give/lend military equipment to Britain in exchange for leases on British bases

July 1940 - Operation Sea Lion

- Code name for German plan to invade Great Britain
- Germany needed control of the air before the invasion could take place

July - Sept 1940 - Battle of Britain

- German fighters and bombers attack British planes, air fields, ports, and factories -- attempt to get command of the sky and cripple British industrial capacity
- Germans were destroying British aircraft and pilots faster than they could be replaced
- After Britain bombs Berlin, the Germans switch from bombing air fields and factories to bombing cities

Sept 1940 - May 1941 - The Blitz

- constant and mass bombing by the Luftwaffe of British cities
- goal -- demoralize the civilians so they will pressure the government to surrender
- this takes the pressure off the R.A.F. -- it recovers

1940 - 1944 - Battle of the Atlantic

- Germany's attempt to cut off supplies to Britain from North America
- submarines sink merchant ships
  - U-boats -- Wolf Packs
- Allies counter with -- convoys, sonar, escort ships with depth charges, long-range aircraft

Sept 1940 - Tripartite Pact -- unites Japan with Germany and Italy

Spring 1941 - Germany helps Italy defeat Greece

- Germany defeats Yugoslavia
- German army in Libya, under General Rommel, attack the British and threaten Egypt

June 1941 - Operation Barbarossa

- Germany invades the Soviet Union. They take vast numbers of Russian prisoners. They push to the gates of Moscow before being stopped by the Russian winter.

Aug 1941 - The Atlantic Charter

- Roosevelt and Churchill meet off the coast of Newfoundland. They sign an agreement stating the common aims for the United and Britain. They seek no new territory, respect rights of people to have whatever government they wish

Dec 7, 1941 - Japan attack Pearl Harbor

- sinks most of American Pacific fleet -- many battleships lost but aircraft carriers are not damaged
- USA declares war on Japan -- ends isolationism
- Germany declares war on USA
- USA will become "the arsenal of democracy"
- Japan soon captures Hong Kong, Philippines, Borneo, Singapore, New Guinea -- threatens Australia

1942 - Japan talks of forming The Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere -- would include almost all of S.E. Asia -- a trading area under Japanese control

Spring 1942 - Germans again attack in Russia

- goal -- The Caucasus - oil rich area in southern Russia
- had to capture Stalingrad
  - Germans get trapped in Stalingrad and were eventually defeated there in early 1943
  - Stalingrad was the highest point of German advances in Russia

May 1942 - Battle of Coral Sea

- American aircraft carriers stop a Japanese invasion force threatening Australia

June 1942 - Battle of Midway Island

- American aircraft carriers inflict a severe defeat on Japanese naval force attempting to invade Midway Island -- the Japanese navy goes on the defensive

- The war in the Pacific was dominated by:

- naval, air power
- island hopping -- Americans capturing one island after another but isolating strong pockets of Japanese

Aug 1942 - Dieppe -- attempt by the Allies to land in France

- test German defenses; take pressure off Russians
- a major disaster (especially for Canadians)

Oct 1942 - Battle of El Alamein

- British defeat Germans in North Africa -- Germans retreat from North Africa

Jan 1943 - Casablanca Conference

- Roosevelt and Churchill meet and agree on a policy of unconditional surrender of the enemy
- Stalin later endorses the agreement

July 1943 - British and Americans invade Italy

Sept 1943 - Italians overthrow Mussolini and make peace with the Allies

- Germans continue fighting in Italy

Aug 1943 - Quebec Conference

- Roosevelt and Churchill
- They plan the war on Japan and for an attack on Western Europe -- "Operation Overlord"
- Churchill wanted an Anglo-American attack on the Balkans instead in order to prevent the area from being dominated by the Russians after the war
- They discussed a new international peace organization for the post-war period

Oct 1943 - Moscow Conference

- Foreign ministers from Britain, USA, Soviet Union
- agree on establishing an international peace organization after the war
- review but make no decisions on the post-war boundaries of Germany and Poland

Nov 1943 - Cairo Conference

- Roosevelt, Churchill, and Chiang Kai-Shek
- They discuss strategy to defeat Japan
- After the war -- Manchuria and Taiwan will go to China
- Korea to be independent

Nov 1943 - Teheran Conference

- Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin
- Churchill's plan for invading the Balkans was rejected
- Stalin was promised a second front would begin in the spring of 1944
- There was disagreement over Poland's boundaries
- Churchill and Stalin informally sketch out a tentative division of the Balkans into spheres of influence
- Agreement that Germany should be divided but no concrete plans are made

June 6, 1944 - Operation Overlord

- Invasion of France (at Normandy) by the allies
- D-Day
- Germans on the retreat in Western Europe

Dec 1944 - Battle of the Bulge

- The last German offensive in the West. They attempted to break out and push to capture strategic ports supplying the Allies
- The attempt fails

Spring 1945 - The Allies enter Germany

Feb 1945 - Yalta Conference

- Roosevelt, Churchill, Stalin agreed to:
  - Germany to be disarmed and demilitarized
  - Punishment for war criminals
  - Reparations from Germany
  - Germany to be divided into 4 zones of occupation (British, American, French, Soviet). An "Allied Control Council" was to make decisions about the country as a whole.
  - Solidified plans for a United Nations with a Security Council with 5 permanent members who had veto powers.
  - Soviets would keep Eastern Poland. Poland would get territory from Eastern Germany. Soviets promised there would be free elections in Poland (They broke this promise.)
  - Democratic elections in liberated countries
  - Soviet Union was to declare war on Japan within 90 days of the end of the war in Europe. Soviets were to get:
    - Southern part of Sakhalin Island
    - the Kuril Islands
    - other concessions in the Far East

April 30, 1945 - Hitler commits suicide.

May 8, 1945 - Germany surrenders -- V-E Day.

May 1945 - American bombers devastate Tokyo in fire bomb raids

July 1945 - American naval units shell the entrance to Tokyo Bay

July 26, 1945 - Potsdam Conference

- Truman, Stalin, Churchill (later Atlee)

- Agreements on:

- liquidation of Germany's military power
- Germany occupied by the 4 powers
- Trial of war criminals at Nuremberg by an International Military Tribunal -- USA, Britain, France, Soviet Union
- Loss of territory by Germany and settlement of Germany's borders
- Reparations

- Ultimatum -- They demand that the Japanese surrender unconditionally or face terrible destruction of their country

Aug 6, 1945 - Americans drop atomic bomb on Hiroshima

- Over 60,000 people die

Aug 8, 1945 - Soviet Union declares war on Japan

Aug 9, 1945 - Second atomic bomb is dropped -- Nagasaki

Aug 14, 1945 - Japan surrenders

- Japan gets to keep its Emperor but he must take orders from the Allied Supreme Commander in the Pacific -- General MacArthur

Sep 2, 1945 - Japan signs the surrender documents -- WW II is over.

VJ Day (Victory over Japan)

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