

# Notes: World War II

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## *Spielvogel Chapter 27*

### I. Prelude to War (1933-39)

1. *Divided Societies* - World situation of 1930s offers dictatorships great opportunity to make trouble
2. Dissatisfied Nations – Germany, Japan, Italy, USSR
  - a. Wanted to change balance of power set in 1919-20
  - b. Thought unfavorable to them
  - c. All were dictatorships
  - d. Willing & able to use armed force
3. Satisfied nations – France, Britain, U.S., smaller New Nations – Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland
  - a. Belief that they would prosper under the treaties of 1919-20
  - b. Govts. Of France & Britain not vigorous (pacifists)
  - c. Lacked understanding of strength and vigor of dictatorships
  - d. Held back by fear of war – WWI a mistake that shouldn't happen again
4. Three political ideologies exist
  - a. Communism, Fascism, Republicanism
    - Fascism most aggressive

### B. *Fascist Aggression*

1. Hitler continues demand for lebensraum (living space)
  - a. Excuse for economic and political expansion
2. 1933 – Hitler begins verbal attack on Versailles Treaty – everyone else's fault
3. 1933 – demands Germany be allowed to fully rearm – refused – withdraws from League of Nations – first major aggressive act
4. 1934 – tries to unite Germany and Austria – Mussolini mobilizes in protest – Hitler stops attempt – no one else says or does anything
5. Hitler openly builds armed forces by 1935 – mild protest
6. Oct. 1935-May 1936 – Mussolini takes Ethiopia – uses modern warfare and poison gas – Emperor (Haile Selassie) appeals to League
7. League denounces Mussolini but no action (Britain afraid embargoes against Italy would unite Hitler and Mussolini)
8. March 1936 – Hitler marches army across Rhine into Western Germany – against Versailles Treaty – takes Rhineland
  - a. Britain and France protest (move is against Locarno) – but no action – Hitler willing to withdraw – weak German military
9. 1936 – Hitler & Mussolini enter into alliance – Rome-Berlin Axis 1937 – joined by Japan – becomes anti-Comintern Pact – directed at USSR – (organization set up by Lenin for world communist revolution) could pressure unsure democracies
10. March 1938 – Hitler moves into Austria (plebiscite run by Nazis) and completes “Anschluss” – union of Germany and Austria-ineffective protest from Britain & France

11. Nazis stir up demands for annexation by Germans in Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia
12. Munich Conference (appeasement) – Sept. 1938 – France, Britain, Italy, Germany meet-agree Sudetenland goes to Hitler-annexed
  - a. Neville Chamberlain (British PM 1937-40) thinks Hitler will be satisfied “peace in our time”
  - b. Edouard Daladier of France agrees
  - c. Opposed by Winston Churchill
  - d. Oct. 1938 – turning point – could Hitler have been stopped here?
13. March 1939 – Hitler takes rest of Czech and part of Lithuania
14. April 1939 – Mussolini takes Albania
15. France and Britain promise to step in if Hitler invades Poland (Hitler wants “Polish Corridor”)
16. Aug. 1939 – Germany & USSR sign non-aggression pact – Nazi-Soviet Pact
17. Sept. 1 – Hitler invades Poland
18. Sept. 3 – Britain & France declare war – it’s on! As had happened 25 years earlier

## II. WWII

### A. *Triumph of the Axis Powers (1939-40)*

1. The fate of Poland
  - a. New warfare revealed
  - b. Heavy bombing to disrupt supplies and communications – softening up
  - c. Germans introduce Blitzkrieg (Lightning War) – tanks, trucks, airplanes
    - Luftwaffe – air force
    - Wehrmacht – armored, mechanized ground force
    - Panzer – tanks
  - d. Poland occupied by Germans within a month
  - e. WWII to be a war of movement – not like trenches of WWI
2. Fate of Western Europe
  - a. French confident because of “Maginot Line” along eastern border – invincible
  - b. Winter of 1939-40 – called the “Phony War” (Sitzkrieg – sitting war)
  - c. Spring 1940 – Germans take Denmark, Norway – do not want blockade as in WWI
  - d. British are shocked – elect Winston Churchill P.M-1940 – punish Chamberlain for appeasement
  - e. Germans invade France May 1940 through Netherlands and Belgium – take low countries – go around Maginot Line
  - f. British, French, Belgian troops trapped at Dunkirk – May 28-June 4, 1940
    - Rescued by citizens with every conceivable boat possible-to England within 4 days – became legend-called “Miracle at Dunkirk” (350-400K)

- g. June 1940 – France collapses within 1 ½ months – 3<sup>rd</sup> Republic gone
- h. Three French Governments
  - Germans occupy Northern France
  - Southern France governed by pro-German French – capital at Vichy – called Vichy govt. – hated by patriotic French –
  - the Resistance was organized and fought underground war against Occupation Forces – became famous – kept contact with free French in England led by Charles de Gaulle
- i. Many French had given up hope and decided to try to exist under a Hitler Europe

#### B. *The Indecisive Years (1940-42)*

1. The Battle of Britain – England is now alone
  - a. Summer 1940 – Hitler begins to bomb England – preparation to invade – needed control of the skies
    - Gives up daytime bombing due to radar of RAF
    - “Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few” – Churchill
    - Night bombing killed and terrified many – civilian bombing an attempt to break peoples will
  - b. Enigma – secret German radio code for plans – Germans didn’t know it had been broken (1939)
    - Ultra – British code to pass information about what Germany was planning (1940) – Germans didn’t know it existed
  - c. Spring 1941 – Hitler gives up idea of invasion
2. Hitler in Europe
  - a. Hitler takes Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia (1941)
  - b. Italians beaten by British in Egypt, Greece
  - c. Hitler send troops to dislodge British – has Balkans – ready for next move – (bails out Mussolini)
  - d. Hitler frustrated at slow pace on western front decides to go after the Soviet Union
  - e. Blitzkrieg good for plains of Russia – quick summer campaign!!
  - f. Great success early – winter comes early – troops not prepared- Hitler refuses to pull back
  - g. Suddenly becomes a 2-front war
3. U.S. Involvement
  - a. U.S. must decide – where is its best interest – isolationist and a fascist Europe or involvement and a free Europe
  - b. Resistance helps set up Lend-Lease Act between U.S. and Britain- 1941 – arrives just in time – U.S. to support with war materials – any country whose defense is vital to U.S. defense is vital to U.S. defense – spent \$50B by 1945
  - c. August 1941 – Roosevelt & Churchill meet aboard ship and sign Atlantic Charter
    - Declares collective security and self-determination
  - d. U.S. sends aid to USSR after German invasion

- e. Pearl Harbor - U.S. in the war – December 1941
- 4. The Holocaust (1942-43)
  - a. People of all countries occupied by Nazis were brutalized
  - b. Jews treated worst of all – held in concentration camps – Auschwitz (12,000/day), Treblinka, Buchenwald, Belzec, Dachau, Lansberg
    - Mass shootings, gas chambers
  - c. Genocide – systematic killing of a people – Hitler calls it the “final solution” known as “holocaust” – effort of industry – thousands involved in building areas specifically for killing other humans (Joseph Mengele – Dr. Death)
  - d. Nazis sew seeds of own destruction because:
    - Their atrocities and forced labor sparked resistance throughout conquered territory
    - Extermination policies diverted resources needed for the war
    - American productivity surpassed anything Germany could match - esp. when Jewish scientists fled to the U.S.

*C. The Turning Point (1942-43)*

- 1. Stalingrad - Russia
  - a. Germans need Caspian oil fields – lay siege to Stalingrad (key battle August-Oct. 1942)
  - b. Russia resistance fierce - Stalin refused to give up his namesake - will sacrifice over 1 million lives
  - c. German generals beg Hitler to let them retreat
    - Hitler refuses – overall, abt. 750,000 German troops will die in fighting, starving, freezing
  - d. Germans surrender Feb. 1943
  - e. Russians begin offensive – Germans on defense
  - f. Hitler had overextended himself as had Napoleon
- 2. El Alamein – Egypt
  - a. British-American forces land in Morocco and Algeria – move east
  - b. British defeat Erwin Rommel (Desert Fox) and the Afrikakorps at El Alamein (Oct. 1942) in Egypt (Germans had wanted Suez) – under Bernard Montgomery
  - c. Amphibious warfare introduced
  - d. Germans driven out of Africa in Tunisia (May 1943)

*D. The Last Years of the War (1943-45)*

- 1. Importance of Supply Lines
  - a. Side that could produce uninterrupted supply of military equipment had the advantage
  - b. Germany had bombing advantage until mid-1942 – swings to allies by 1943
  - c. Allies bombing Germany 24 hrs/day – attempt to break German people’s will
  - d. 1945 – more than half of war production comes from U.S. (not suffering local devastation)
  - e. U.S. supplies steady stream of loans and war materials to allies

- f. U.S. involved because:
  - Bonds of western culture, especially British
  - Importance of European industrial power
  - Russia might not survive without help
- g. U.S. puts priority on war in Europe over war with Japan
- 2. Defeat of Italy
  - a. Allied amphibious landing in Sicily – July 1943 – Decision made at Casablanca Conference (Jan. 1943) between Roosevelt and Churchill
  - b. Italy invaded at Anzio – Jan. 1944
  - c. Tehran Conf. In Dec. 1943 between Stalin, FDR, Churchill – plans for Normandy invasion and Russian invasion of Germany
    - also begin talk of the United Nations
  - d. Coup d'état restores power of king (1943) (Victor Emmanuel III – eventually abdicated to son) – Mussolini deposed and imprisoned – Fascism abandoned – Italy joins allies
  - e. Mussolini escapes – sets up fascist govt. in North Italy with assistance of Hitler – captured and killed 1945 – shot and hung upside down in Milan
- 3. Defeat of Germany
  - a. Attacked from 3 directions
  - b. Russians move into Balkans and Poland from East
  - c. Greatest triumph in France
    - D-Day – June 6, 1944 – operation Overlord
    - Eisenhower leads allies invasion of Normandy (a second front) – largest sea invasion in all history – 5,000 ships, 150,000 men, 1500 tanks – 12,000 planes
  - d. Germans unsure of where it would take place – thought it would be near Calais
  - e. Within a month – 1M troops in France
  - f. Another invasion in South France (mouth of Rhone River)
  - g. Continuing push up from Italy
  - h. Last great German offensive – Dec. 1944 – Battle of the Bulge (mostly Germans vs. Americans) in Belgium (Ardennes Forest) Dec. 1944
  - i. Failed – Germans retreat to Siegfried line
  - j. Hitler commits suicide Apr. 30
  - k. May 2, Berlin falls to Soviets
  - l. Formal surrender – May 8, 1945 War continues with Japan until Sept. 2, 1945 – WWII over

### III. The Beginning of the Cold War

#### A. *Unsettled Issues*

1. Fascism gone
2. Communism the new enemy of western democracies
3. Could Stalin be trusted?
4. Was this a repeat of Chamberlain and Hitler in 1938?

#### B. *Conferences*

1. Yalta - just before the end of the war

- a. Stalin, FDR, & Churchill meet again
  - b. Stalin wants Poland as a defensive buffer - desires pro-Communist government
    - U.S. wants Poland to have free elections
  - c. Germany to be divided among the Allied powers
    - They knew that whoever got Berlin would have strongest claim
    - Soviets and Britain race to Berlin
    - U.S. heads south to Dresden - better military target - ensures that Soviets reach Berlin first
  - d. only real agreement - we need a U.N.
2. Potsdam - after war with Germany over; before end of war with Japan
    - a. Potsdam Declaration - Japan must surrender unconditionally