Notes: World War II

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
      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
   7. League denounces Mussolin 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
   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”)
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 – 3rd 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

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

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

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
   b. Italy invaded at Anzio – Jan. 1944
      - 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