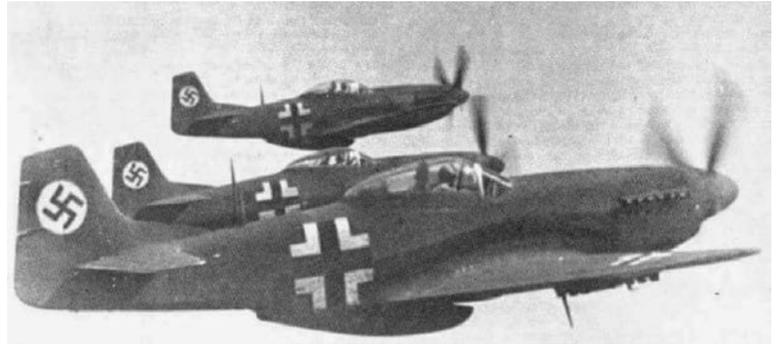


World War II: The Early Years

1939

and towns. Naval bases were attacked and boats were sunk. But the Germans did not act alone. While Germany attacked from the West, the Soviet Union attacked from the east. Within a month, Poland ceased (stopped) to exist. That left Germany and the Soviet Union to partition (divide) Poland as they wanted. With the outbreak of war in September, the United States also made their stance known. They declared neutrality (stay out of war), trying to avoid being drawn into another European conflict.

The Second World War started on September 1, 1939 after Germany invaded Poland. This act of aggression (violence) led Britain and France to declare war on Germany two days later. Hitler attacked Poland with brutality (violence). Luftwaffe, the German air force, bombed airfields, factories



Luftwaffe planes.

HELP THE ALLIES NOW TO WIN

So our **MEN** will never be necessary

CASH AND CARRY

Postcard in support of Cash and Carry policy.

While trying to remain neutral, the United States also understood they could not leave allies with no help. President Franklin D. Roosevelt would walk a tightrope over the next months, trying to help but also remain out of war. With the outbreak of war, the Neutrality Acts no longer made sense so a new policy was enacted. In November of 1939, the United States began the policy of cash and carry to replace the Neutrality Acts. This allowed the United States to provide non-war material to countries that were invested (part of) in World War II. Recipients had to transport goods on their own ships and use cash to immediately pay for goods. This policy paved the way for the future Lend-Lease Act.

Also in November, Soviet troops invaded Finland. This act of aggression would lead to the Soviet Union being expelled (forced to leave) from the League of Nations in December 1939.

WEATHER
TEMPERATURES

THE OGDEN Standard Examiner

OGDEN CITY, UTAH, WEDNESDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 29, 1939. 16 Pages FINAL EDITION

RUSSIANS BREAK OFF RELATIONS WITH FINLAND

Helsingfors Braced As Reds Order Withdrawal of Troops



British rationing propaganda.

As the war effort got on its feet, Britain began to ration (limit) goods. The first item to be rationed during the war was oil (petrol, as the British call it). Bacon, butter, and sugar were also rationed.

1940

By March 1940, Finland had signed a peace treaty with the Soviet Union. This, unfortunately, would not last, meaning Finland would continue to defend their territory from the Soviet Union throughout the war. The Soviet Union's ally, Germany, was also busy. During the month of April, Hitler and the Nazis invaded both Denmark and Norway.

So how did Sweden remain neutral in all this? Sweden declared themselves neutral. But Germany could still invade, no? Well, Germany relied on Sweden for iron ore. That iron ore went into making weapons and tanks. Germany could not afford to lose their trade agreement with Sweden, they were too valuable to risk. Meanwhile, the Swedes also provided some troops to the Allied forces and helped Finland against the Soviet Union.

Hitler and the Nazis were not happy to just take Denmark and Norway. They pressed (moved) forward to take new territory. In May they also invaded France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands. Germany used blitzkrieg, or "lightening war," against the Netherlands and Belgium. Blitzkrieg was a new military tactic that required the concentration of offensive weapons (tanks, planes, and artillery) along a narrow front (this means lots of tanks, planes, and artillery used at one time in the same place). The point of these were to quickly break down enemy lines, cause disorder and confusion, leading to quick surrender. The blitzkrieg



Luftwaffe bombers. Blitzkrieg.

BATTLE OF DUNKIRK

As German troops poured into France through Belgium, British troops had to retreat. Soon, the British were trapped between the Germans and the English Channel. In a desperate gamble, the British sent all available naval vessels, merchant ships, and even fishing and pleasure boats across the channel to pluck stranded troops off the beaches of Dunkirk. Despite German air attacks, the improvised armada ferried more than 300,000 troops to safety in Britain. This heroic rescue raised British morale.

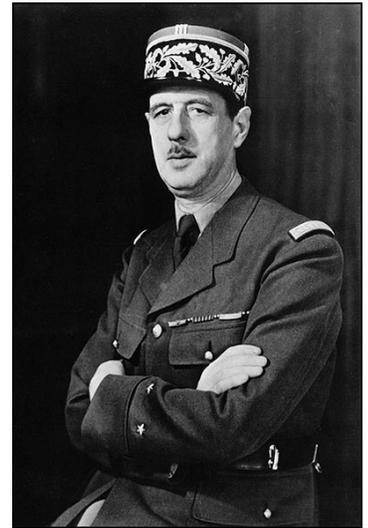
tactics would be successful, with Dutch and Belgian armies surrendering to Germany before the end of the month.

Also in May, Neville Chamberlain resigned as Prime Minister of England. Winston Churchill would take his place. Chamberlain remained in Churchill's cabinet until a few weeks prior to his death of bowel cancer in November 1940.

June turned out to be a very pivotal (essential) month for the war. It is here that Germany conquered France. Now, Britain stood almost entirely alone against Hitler and the Nazis. Also during the month, Italy formally entered the war. They had been considered a "non-belligerent" (not in the war) up until now, despite being part of the Axis Powers. They declared war on France and Britain. Mussolini saw the end of war coming quickly and hoped to be reap (gain) the rewards of being on the winning side.

With the invasion of France in May, the Germans began bombing Paris in June. On June 14th the Germans entered Paris as the victors (winners). This included Hitler touring his “prize” on June 23rd, the day after France signed an armistice (agreement to end fighting) with Germany. Ironically, France signed surrender papers in the same railcar Germany had signed their armistice agreement ending World War I.

Germany, now in control of France, occupied northern France and set up a “puppet” (controlled by Germany) government in the south with its capital at Vichy. Some French officials, however, had escaped France, fleeing to Britain. There they set up a government in exile. Britain soon recognized one of those men, Charles de Gaulle, as the leader of the “Free French.” This group worked to liberate their homeland of France from Nazi control.

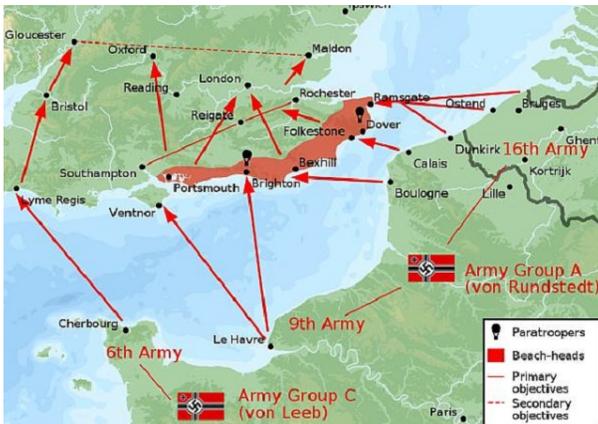


Charles de Gaulle

July saw the Germans step up their attacks. German U-boats attacked merchant ships in the Atlantic, and Hitler began to offensively attack Britain. This began the Battle of Britain. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union took (conquered) Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia.

By August, Italy was becoming more involved in the war effort, taking Allied lands in Africa. Germany continued their focus on Britain, declaring a blockade of British waters. Further, Germany also began daily air raids of British airfields, military targets, and factories. Soon after daytime air raids began all over Britain. By the end of the month the first air raids began over London.

As September started Hitler began Operation Sea Lion, his attempt at invading Britain. Just as he had invaded Poland, Denmark, France, and so many others, Britain was next on his list. This was a last resort as Hitler had assumed Britain would want to negotiate (talk about) a peace treaty.



Operation Sea Lion plans.

Also in September, Germany, Italy, and Japan entered into a ten year military agreement known as the Tripartite Pact. They would become known as the Axis Powers. Soon after Italy would invade Egypt.

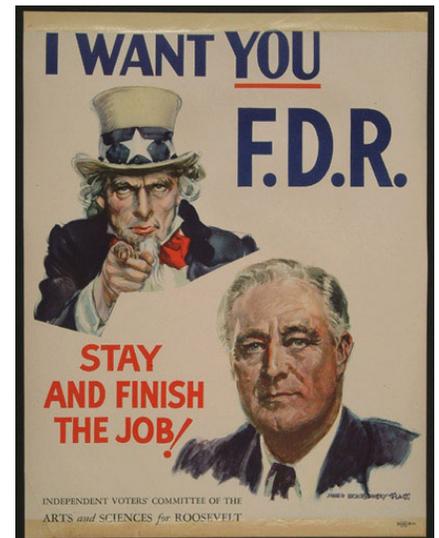
Meanwhile, the United States sensing further aggression passed the first

conscription (draft of soldiers) bill ever to occur during peacetime. This allowed for a military draft.

October continued the aggressive Axis push for more land. German troops invaded Romania, while Italy invaded Greece. But, Germany stalled on Operation Sea Lion, gaining no ground. They, therefore, postponed Operation Sea Lion until spring 1941.

In November, President Roosevelt was re-elected as President of the United States. Later in the month, Hungary and Romania would join the Axis Powers.

As 1940 came to a close, there was no end of war in sight. 1941 brought more troubles for Europe and the United States.



Poster in support of FDR in 1940 U.S. election.