

Section 2

World War II Begins

Guide to Reading

Big Ideas

Trade, War, and Migration World War II officially began with the Nazi invasion of Poland and the French and British declarations of war on Germany in September 1939.

Content Vocabulary

- appeasement (p. 461)
- blitzkrieg (p. 462)

Academic Vocabulary

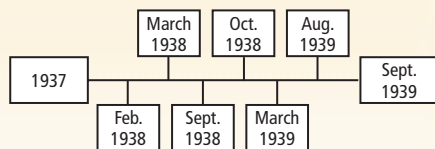
- violation (p. 460)
- regime (p. 460)
- concentrate (p. 462)
- transport (p. 465)

People and Events to Identify

- *Anschluss* (p. 460)
- Munich Conference (p. 461)
- Maginot Line (p. 462)
- Winston Churchill (p. 465)
- Battle of Britain (p. 465)

Reading Strategy

Sequencing As you read about the events leading up to World War II, record them by completing a time line similar to the one below.



The shadow of World War I loomed large in the minds of European leaders in the late 1930s. Although Nazi Germany appeared increasingly aggressive, Britain and France wanted to avoid another bloody conflict. Efforts to negotiate peaceful agreements with Nazi Germany ultimately would fail.

Path to War

MAIN Idea European nations tried to prevent war by giving in to Adolf Hitler's demands.

HISTORY AND YOU Do you remember reading how Europe was divided after World War I? Read to learn how German demands for more territory started World War II.

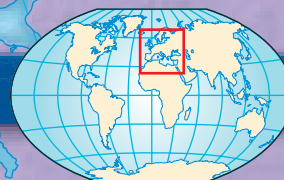
In 1935 Hitler began to defy the Treaty of Versailles that had ended World War I. He announced that Germany would build a new air force and begin a military draft that would greatly expand its army—actions in direct **violation** of the treaty. Rather than enforce the treaty by going to war, European leaders tried to negotiate with Hitler. At the time, the Nazi **regime** was weaker than it later would become. If European leaders had responded more aggressively, could war have been avoided? Historians still debate this question today.

Europe's leaders had several reasons for believing—or wanting to believe—that a deal could be reached with Hitler and that war could be avoided. First, they wanted to avoid a repeat of the bloodshed of World War I. Second, some thought most of Hitler's demands were reasonable, including his demand that all German-speaking regions be united. Third, many people assumed that the Nazis would be more interested in peace once they gained more territory.

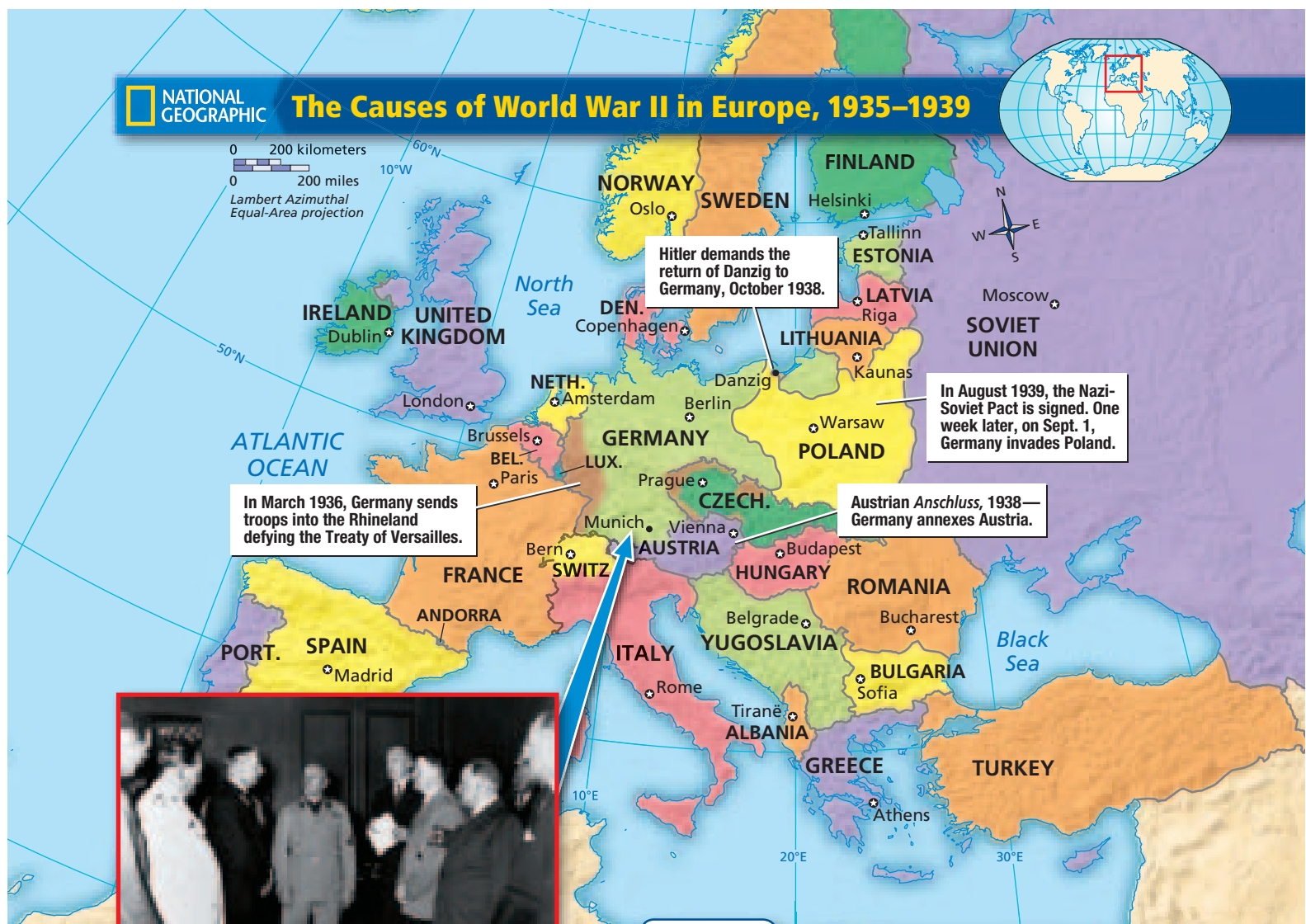
The Austrian *Anschluss*

In late 1937 Hitler again called for the unification of all German-speaking people, including those in Austria and Czechoslovakia. He believed that Germany could expand its territory only by “resort[ing] to force with its attendant risks.”

In February 1938 Hitler threatened to invade German-speaking Austria unless Austrian Nazis were given important government posts. Austria's chancellor gave in to this demand, but then tried to put the matter of unification with Germany to a democratic vote. Fearing the outcome, Hitler sent troops into Austria in March and announced the ***Anschluss***, or unification, of Austria and Germany.



0 200 kilometers
0 200 miles
Lambert Azimuthal Equal-Area projection



▲ At Munich in 1938, Britain's Neville Chamberlain (left) Mussolini (second from left), and Hitler (right) reached a deal that prevented war but required Czechoslovakia to give up the Sudetenland (brown area on the Czech border above) to Germany. Six months later, Germany occupied all of Czechoslovakia.

Analyzing GEOGRAPHY

- 1. Region** Why do you think Hitler's first military action was in the Rhineland?
- 2. Region** Why might Hitler have welcomed a nonaggression pact with the Soviets?

See *StudentWorks™ Plus* or glencoe.com.

The Munich Crisis

Hitler next announced German claims to the Sudetenland, an area of Czechoslovakia with a large German-speaking population. The Czechs strongly resisted Germany's demands for the Sudetenland. France threatened to fight if Germany attacked Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union also promised aid. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain pledged Britain's support to France, its ally.

Representatives of Britain, France, Italy, and Germany agreed to meet in Munich to decide Czechoslovakia's fate. At the **Munich**

Conference, on September 29, 1938, Britain and France agreed to Hitler's demands, a policy that came to be known as **appeasement**. In other words, they made concessions in exchange for peace. Supporters of appeasement believed that Hitler had a few limited demands. They felt that if they gave him what he wanted, they could avoid war. Czechoslovakia was told to give up the Sudetenland or fight Germany on its own. When Chamberlain returned home, he promised "a peace with honor . . . peace in our time," but he also began to speed up British rearmament—in case appeasement failed.

Appeasement did fail to preserve the fragile peace. In March 1939 Germany sent troops into Czechoslovakia and divided the country. Slovakia became independent in name, but it was actually under German control. The Czech lands became a German protectorate.

Hitler Demands Danzig


A month after the Munich Conference, Hitler demanded that the city of Danzig be returned to German control. Although Danzig was more than 90 percent German, it had been part of Poland since World War I. Hitler also requested a highway and railroad across the Polish Corridor, an area that separated western Germany from the German state of East Prussia.

Hitler's new demands convinced Britain and France that war was inevitable. On March 31, 1939, Britain announced that if Poland went to war to defend its territory, Britain and France would come to its aid. This declaration encouraged Poland to refuse Hitler's demands. In May 1939, Hitler ordered the German army to prepare to invade Poland. He also ordered his foreign minister to begin negotiations with the USSR. If Germany was going to fight Britain and France, Hitler did not want to have to fight the Soviets, too.

The Nazi-Soviet Pact

When German officials proposed a nonaggression treaty to the Soviets, Stalin agreed. He believed the best way to protect the USSR was to turn the capitalist nations against each other. If the treaty worked, Germany would go to war against Britain and France, and the USSR would be safe.

C The nonaggression pact, signed by Germany and the USSR on August 23, 1939, shocked the world. Communism and Nazism were supposed to be totally opposed to each other. Leaders in Britain and France understood, however, that Hitler had made the deal to free himself for war against their countries and Poland. They did not know that the treaty also contained a secret deal to divide Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union.

 **Identifying** What regions did Hitler take or demand in the lead-up to the war?

The War Begins

MAIN Idea After Poland and France fell to the Nazis, the British evacuated thousands of trapped troops from Dunkirk.

HISTORY AND YOU Can you think of a contemporary situation in which people acted heroically to save others in danger? Read to learn about the heroism of civilians and soldiers in World War II.

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, Britain and France declared war on Germany. World War II had begun.

Poland bravely resisted Germany's onslaught, but its army was outdated. The Polish army rode horses and carried lances against German tanks. In addition, the Germans used a new type of warfare called **blitzkrieg**, or "lightning war." Blitzkrieg used large numbers of massed tanks to break through and rapidly encircle enemy positions. To support the tanks, waves of aircraft bombed enemy positions and dropped paratroopers to cut their supply lines. The Polish army could not repel the attack. Warsaw, the Polish capital, fell to the Germans on September 27. By October 5, 1939, the Germans had defeated the Polish military.

The Fall of France

In contrast to the war in Poland, western Europe remained eerily quiet. The Germans referred to this situation as the *sitzkrieg*, or "sitting war." The British called it the "Bore War," while American newspapers nicknamed it the "Phony War." The British had sent troops to France, and both countries remained on the defensive, waiting for the Germans to attack.

After World War I, the French had built a line of concrete bunkers and fortifications called the **Maginot Line** along the German border. Rather than risk their troops by attacking, the French preferred to wait behind the Maginot Line for the Germans to approach. This decision proved to be disastrous for two reasons. First, it allowed Germany to **concentrate** on Poland first before turning west to face the British and French. Second, Hitler decided to go around the Maginot Line, which protected France's border with Germany but not France's border with Belgium.

To get around the Maginot Line, the Germans would have to invade the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxembourg first—which is exactly what they did. On May 10, Hitler launched a new blitzkrieg. While German troops parachuted into the Netherlands, an army of tanks rolled into Belgium and Luxembourg.

The British and French had expected the German attack. As soon as it began, British and French forces raced north into Belgium. This was a mistake. Instead of sending their tanks through the open countryside of central Belgium, the Germans sent their main force through the Ardennes Mountains of Luxembourg and eastern Belgium. The French did not think that large numbers of tanks could move through the mountains, and had left

only a few troops to defend that part of the border. The Germans easily smashed through the French lines, then turned west across northern France to the English Channel. The British and French armies were still in Belgium and could not move back into France quickly enough. They were now trapped in Belgium.

The Miracle at Dunkirk

After trapping the Allied forces in Belgium, the Germans began to drive them toward the English Channel. The only hope for Britain and France was to evacuate their surviving troops by sea, but the Germans had captured all but one port, Dunkirk, in northern France near the Belgian border.

D

TECHNOLOGY & HISTORY

Blitzkrieg In 1939 Germany unleashed blitzkrieg—lightning war—on Europe. Blitzkrieg combined several technologies—aircraft, tanks, parachutes, and radios—to produce a highly mobile, fast-moving army that could coordinate multiple attacks, break through lines, and rapidly encircle enemy positions.



▲ German tanks rolled into Poland in 1939, ahead of the infantry, which followed to end any resistance. The bombers supported the swift-moving tanks from the air. The armored tanks, known as Panzers, often moved so rapidly that they had to wait for the infantry to catch up.



◀ A superior air force led to Germany's defeat of western Europe by summer 1940. The aircraft could drop paratroopers behind enemy lines as well as bomb targets.



Analyzing VISUALS

- 1. Drawing Conclusions** What do you observe about the advance of the Panzer tanks in the photo on the left?
- 2. Evaluating** What dangers do you think the paratroopers in the center photo may have faced?

C As German forces closed in on Dunkirk, Hitler suddenly ordered them to stop. No one is sure why he gave this order. Historians know that Hitler was nervous about risking his tank forces, and he wanted to wait until more infantry arrived. Hermann Goering, the head of the German air force, also assured Hitler that aircraft alone could destroy the trapped soldiers. There is also some evidence that Hitler thought that the British would be more willing to accept peace if the Germans did not humiliate them by destroying their forces at Dunkirk.

Whatever Hitler's reasons, his order provided a three-day delay. This gave the British time to strengthen their lines and begin the evacuation. Some 850 ships of all sizes—from navy warships to small sailboats operated by civilian volunteers—headed to Dunkirk from England, many of them making the 48-mile trip multiple times. French, Dutch, and Belgian ships joined British ones in "Operation Dynamo." The British had hoped to rescue about 45,000 troops. Instead, when the evacu-

ation ended on June 4, an estimated 338,000 British and French troops had been saved. This became known as the "Miracle at Dunkirk."

The evacuation had its price, however. Almost all of the British army's equipment remained at Dunkirk—90,000 rifles, 7,000 tons of ammunition, and 120,000 vehicles. If Hitler invaded Britain, it would be almost impossible to stop him from conquering the country.

Three weeks later, on June 22, 1940, Hitler accepted the French surrender in the same railway car in which the Germans had surrendered at the end of World War I. Germany now occupied much of northern France and its Atlantic coastline. To govern the rest of France, Germany installed a puppet government at the town of Vichy and made Marshal Philippe Pétain the new government's figurehead leader. Pétain predicted that Britain "will have her neck wrung like a chicken."

Reading Check Explaining By what means did Hitler overtake both Poland and France?

PRIMARY SOURCE

The Battle of Britain, 1940



During the Battle of Britain, bombs fell around London's St. Paul's Cathedral, a famous architectural treasure as well as a place of worship. Some of the subways no longer ran but were converted to air-raid shelters where people could sleep.

PRIMARY SOURCE

"Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail, we shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, 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 wears a thumbs-up pin on his lapel.

—Winston Churchill, Speech to Parliament, June 4, 1940

DBQ Document-Based Questions

- Identifying Points of View** What effect does Churchill suggest the fall of other European states will have on Britain?
- Analyzing Primary Sources** What does Churchill expect to grow as the Allied forces fight the Nazis?
- Hypothesizing** What effect do you think Churchill's words had on those who heard or read the speech?

Britain Remains Defiant

MAIN Idea Despite the bombing of London and other major cities, Britain's Winston Churchill stood firm against the threat of Nazi invasion.

HISTORY AND YOU Think of a time when the odds were against you. How did you react? Read about British resolve when faced with Nazi air raids.

Neither Pétain nor Hitler anticipated the bravery of the British people or the spirit of their leader, **Winston Churchill**, who had replaced Neville Chamberlain as prime minister. Hitler expected Britain to negotiate peace after France surrendered, but on June 4, 1940, Churchill delivered a defiant speech in Parliament, vowing that Britain would never surrender. The speech was intended to rally the British people and to alert the isolationist United States to Britain's plight.

Realizing Britain would not surrender, Hitler ordered his commanders to prepare to invade. Getting across the English Channel, however, posed a major challenge. Germany had few **transport** ships, and the British air force would sink them if they tried to land troops in England. To invade, therefore, Germany first had to defeat the British Royal Air Force.


In June 1940, the German air force, called the *Luftwaffe*, began to attack British shipping in the English Channel. Then, in mid-August, the *Luftwaffe* launched an all-out air battle to destroy the Royal Air Force. This air battle, which lasted into the fall of 1940, became known as the **Battle of Britain**.

On August 23, German bombers accidentally bombed London, the British capital. This attack on civilians enraged the British, who responded by bombing Berlin the following night. For the first time in the war, bombs fell on the German capital. Infuriated, Hitler ordered the *Luftwaffe* to stop its attacks on British military targets and to concentrate on bombing London.

Hitler's goal was to terrorize the British people into surrendering. The British endured, however, taking refuge in cellars and subway stations whenever German bombers appeared.

Although the Royal Air Force was greatly outnumbered, the British had one major advantage. They had developed a new technology called radar. Using radar stations placed along their coast, the British were able to detect incoming German aircraft and direct British fighters to intercept them.

Day after day, the British fighters inflicted more losses on the Germans than they suffered. During the long battle, Germany lost 1,733 aircraft while the British lost 915 fighter planes, along with 449 pilots. The skill of more than 2,000 British and 500 foreign pilots—including many Poles, Canadians, Frenchmen, and a few Americans—successfully thwarted Hitler's plan to invade Britain. These pilots flew as often as five times a day. Praising them, Churchill told Parliament, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." On October 12, 1940, Hitler canceled the invasion of Britain.

 **Evaluating** How was Britain able to resist Hitler and the Nazis?

Section 2 REVIEW

Vocabulary

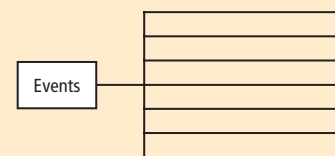
1. **Explain** the significance of: *Anschluss*, Munich Conference, appeasement, blitzkrieg, Maginot Line, Winston Churchill, Battle of Britain.

Main Ideas

2. **Explaining** Why did Europe's leaders first try to deal with Hitler through appeasement?
3. **Analyzing** Why was the decision to leave French forces behind the Maginot Line disastrous for Europe?
4. **Summarizing** In what ways did Winston Churchill prove to be an effective leader for Britain as the war began?

Critical Thinking

5. **Big Ideas** What was the new type of warfare used by Germany against Poland? Explain the technique.
6. **Organizing** Use a graphic organizer similar to the one below to list early events of the war in Poland and western Europe.



7. **Analyzing Visuals** Look again at the photograph on page 461. What do you observe about the participants at the Munich Conference?

Writing About History

8. **Expository Writing** Choose one dramatic incident from the beginnings of World War II and write a news story explaining what happened.

History  **ONLINE**

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