



Speaker: World War Two had tremendous and far-reaching impacts on the middle of the 20th century. In many ways, the problems that were unresolved from World War One led to the tensions that erupted in World War Two. The war began with Germany invading Poland. Nine months later, it was clear to both Britain and France that Hitler's armies were on a massive expansion campaign, and they declared war upon Germany.

This allowed German troops to then invade their enemy, France, and France was eventually overtaken and occupied by Germany. Two-thirds of France was under German control. Without the support of France, Hitler was sure that Britain would soon fall as well. However, this proved not to be the case and Britain persevered even after wide-scale and massive bombings throughout the country by the German air force.

Meanwhile, across the globe in Southeast Asia, Japanese leaders struck a deal with the government of occupied France and this allowed Japanese troops to invade French-Indo China which we know today as Vietnam, and they continued their campaign pressing forward into mainland China. Hitler and the Japanese emperor, Hirohito, entered into an agreement that dictated that if the United States got involved in the conflict, Japan and Germany would create an alliance.

Japan then provoked the United States by launching an air attack on the American naval base Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The United States immediately declared war with Japan and so, as a consequence, Germany declared war on the United States. For the next five years the war raged throughout Europe, Asia, South Pacific, Russia, North Africa and there were even hand-to-hand skirmishes in Southwest Alaska.

Now, in addition to the war efforts led by Hitler's army, Hitler's Nazi party launched a campaign of extermination on the Jews of Europe, executing as many as 12,000 in a single day with an estimated 67 million dead by the time they were liberated by the allied forces. The turning point in the war in Europe came with D-Day, June 1944, when allied forces regained the beaches of northern France. This, in addition to the allied air power, brought about the demolition of Germany's industrial base. Oil productions and supply lines were cut off and Hitler's troops were eventually pushed into Berlin which was captured and victory was declared in May of 1945.

The end of the war in the Pacific arena was prompted by the United States dropping two nuclear bombs on two cities in Japan, bringing on the most unimaginable and horrifying destruction of life and property that the world has ever seen. This led to Japan's surrender a few days later.

At the end of the war, 17 million soldiers were dead and 18 million civilians, with the economies of Europe and Asia in ruins.

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