

# Early Blows



After a series of invasions and broken promises, by the fall of 1938 the world watched and waited to see what Hitler would do next. The German army had already taken over Austria and the Sudetenland, but European leaders hoped that **appeasing** Hitler at the Munich Conference would end his thirst for land and power. They agreed to his demands in exchange for Hitler's vow to end his aggressions. But only six months later, the German leader reneged on his word and his armies gobbled up the rest of Czechoslovakia. Britain and France were further stunned when Joseph Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union, signed a non-aggression pact with Hitler, giving the Germans a green light to move into Eastern Europe.

As expected, Germany launched "blitzkrieg," or lightning war, on Poland on September 1, 1939. Also as expected, Britain and France honored their commitment to defend Poland, as those in their alliance had agreed. Both nations declared war on Germany. The uneasy peace that had held since 1919 ended. When President Roosevelt was awakened at 3 A.M. with the news, he replied, "It has come at last. God help us all." Still, he continued to pledge neutrality, and Americans hoped and prayed the European democracies would win quickly. Unfortunately, they did not; instead the situation worsened quickly.

After the collapse of Poland, a chilling fear fell over Europe as Hitler prepared his next move. Lightning struck again in April of 1940. German armies overran Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and finally, France. By late June France was forced to surrender and Great Britain stood alone in the fight against Nazi Germany.

The fall of France shocked Americans as they realized the only thing standing between Hitler and the U.S. was the British Navy's control of the Atlantic Ocean. To soften Great Britain for a land attack, Hitler began to air bomb the island nation in August 1940. For months on end the Battle of Britain raged (pictured above). Brave Londoners huddled in underground subway tunnels as the Royal Air Force valiantly defended their city. Having expected a quick defeat, the British refusal to give in to the nightly air raids meant Hitler did not have enough fuel to continue them. In June of 1941, only a year after occupying France, Hitler once more went back on his word and invaded the oil-rich Soviet Union.

Based on context cues, the word "appeasement" **MOST NEARLY** means

- A. quickly attacking other countries.
- B. giving into someone to avoid war.
- C. refusing the demands of another.
- D. lightning war on another nation.

Though Hitler had \_\_\_\_, he \_\_\_\_ and invaded the Soviet Union in 1941.

- A. pledged neutrality ... moved
- B. fallen to Europe... continued
- C. expected defeat... helped
- D. signed a treaty ... reneged

By the summer of 1941, the situation for the British would **BEST** be described as

- A. brave.
- B. exciting.
- C. dire.
- D. winning.

Which statement is **NOT** supported by passage information?

- A. Most Americans no longer wanted to stay neutral by June 1941.
- B. The blitzkrieg allowed Germany to quickly take over other countries.
- C. Adolf Hitler could not be trusted to keep his word or agreements.
- D. The Polish, French, and other armies were no match for the Germans.