



The Start of World War II: The History of the Events that Culminated with Nazi Germany's Invasion of Poland

Charles River Editors

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*Includes pictures

*Explains the appeasement of the Nazis in Czechoslovakia and Austria, and reactions to it

*Includes accounts of the fighting in Poland

*Includes online resources and a bibliography for further reading

*Includes a table of contents

"We have suffered a total and unmitigated defeat ... you will find that in a period of time which may be measured by years, but may be measured by months, Czechoslovakia will be engulfed in the Nazi régime. We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude ... we have sustained a defeat without a war, the consequences of which will travel far with us along our road ... we have passed an awful milestone in our history, when the whole equilibrium of Europe has been deranged." – Winston Churchill

"My good friends," the mustached, bony man with thick eyebrows and large, strong teeth somewhat reminiscent of those of a horse, shouted to the crowds from the second-floor window of his house at 10 Downing Street, "this is the second time in our history, that there has come back to Downing Street from Germany peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time." (McDonough, 1998, 70). The man addressing the crowd, British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, had just returned from the heart of Nazi Germany following negotiations with Adolf Hitler, and the crowd gathered outside the English leader's house on September 30, 1938 greeted these ringing words with grateful cheers. The piece of paper Chamberlain flourished exultantly seemed to offer permanent amity and goodwill between democratic Britain and totalitarian Germany. In it, Britain agreed to allow Hitler's Third Reich to absorb the Sudeten regions of Czechoslovakia without interference from either England or France, and since high percentages of ethnic Germans – often more than 50% locally – inhabited these regions, Hitler's demand for this territory seemed somewhat reasonable to Chamberlain and his supporters. With Germany resurgent and rearmed after the disasters inflicted on it by the Treaty of Versailles following World War I, the pact – known as the Munich Agreement – held out hope of a quick end to German ambitions and the return of stable, normal international relations across Europe.

Of course, the Munich agreement is now notorious because its promise proved barren within a very short period of time. Chamberlain's actions either failed to avert or actually hastened the very cataclysm he wished to avoid at all costs. The "Munich Agreement" of 1938 effectively signed away Czechoslovakia's independence to Hitler's hungry new Third Reich, and within two years, most of the world found itself plunged into a conflict which made a charnelhouse of Europe and left somewhere between 60-80 million people dead globally.

Of course, as most people now know, the invasion of Poland was merely the preface to the Nazi blitzkrieg of most of Western Europe, which would include Denmark, Belgium, and France by the summer of 1940. The resistance put up by these countries is often portrayed as weak, and the narrative is that the British stood alone in 1940 against the Nazi onslaught, defending the British Isles during the Battle of Britain and preventing a potential German invasion.

In particular, the campaign in Poland is remembered as one in which an antiquated Polish army was quickly

pummeled by the world's most modern army. Polish lancers charging in a valiant yet idiotic attack against German tanks is the only image from the 1939 Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland remaining in the popular imagination today. Originating as a piece of Nazi propaganda, paradoxically adopted by the Poles as a patriotic myth, the fictional charge obscures the actual events of September 1939.

The Start of World War II: The History of the Events that Culminated with Nazi Germany's Invasion of Poland Details

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Rachel says

Unfortunately, this book reads like a college level term paper, even to the point of parenthetical notes. However, the points made are exceptional, and the research is superb. The author brings to the fore the effect of appeasement as a short-sighted effort, which resulted in long-term consequences (world war II), and again in the short-term ignoring of the Soviet threat resulting in the long-term consequence of the cold war. I enjoyed the book, and recommend this short read to other history buffs.

Pamela says

The Munich Agreement to the invasion of Poland

The title says it all. The Start of World War II is a perfectly adequate depiction of the first days of the War, starting with the Munich Agreement and culminating with the invasion of Poland in 1939 by Nazi Germany from the West and Soviet Russia from the East.

Chris Gregory says

Excellent account

This is an excellent, well written, meticulously researched account of the manufacturing of a world war. This is what several world leaders wanted and they got it. It is unfortunate that there were duped back then - not unlike the naive dupes of today. Chamberlain promised peace in his campaign for the prime ministership and when he gave in to the Nazi he claimed peace for the world. What an self deluding buffoon. He reminds me of Obama and Kerry today with the misguided lunacy of the Iran deal.

This writing also delivers the heart-wrenching travails of the Polish people as they were squeezed between Hitler and Stalin. How horrendous, how sad.

This is a story that should be told in every junior high, high school, and college history class! I ask, are we repeating history because we neglected to teach it and learn it?

Barry Burn says

Leaders should be better

Looking at this, it is important to note that leadership is a very fragile thing and not assessing situations properly, though seemingly good in the short term, can and always will lead to long term problems. This

book should be used by all schooling that deals with politics.

Carlton Phelps says

Great information. If you like history about WWII this is a book that should be on your list.

John Ellis says

How World War 2 started

Interesting book on the ruthless German unprovoked attack on Poland and the cowardly Russian attack in the East when it looked like the Poles were beaten.

Sujan Dey says

This book is a collection of events that took place before world war II and during the war .It narrates the sequence of events that lead to this war. The book is very informative. Then leadership of London,Nazi rule in Germany ,decisions of Fuhrer,invasion of Poland and how Poles fought back,Mussolini ,Czechoslovakia ,the book says it all. Its a great book to revisit history. Though its very informative ,but its always reminds you of the history book read in school or college. Those who are great lover of history ,this book is a great pick for them.

Carl Klein says

But choppy

At times the book seemed I can use the tied together string of thoughts rather than providing a cohesive storyline - but for anyone who has not studied their history this is a good primer or introduction and is still a good read regardless

Marcos Kopschitz says

Having read some "Charles River" books, I am getting used to them. They usually produce a very good account of the subject, with a good selection of sources and some photos, images or maps. I read one of their books on a subject I had read a lot about before, and being very satisfied with that one, I took it as a standard.

Their books are not to be expected as complete, comprehensive works, but lean more toward a good overall short account. Choose one if the subject is new to you or you want a good overview. They appeal to me as good introductions, or if I have no intention of reading long works on a specific theme. That said, I like them and think they're very effective in providing good information as well as a good read.

They have produced other books, including those listed below, that provide good information on earlier developments of the Nazi regime, and then on the final moves before the outbreak of war:

1. (1923) The Beer Hall Putsch: The History and Legacy of Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party's Failed Coup Attempt in 1923 - 54 pages
2. (1933) The Burning of the Reichstag: The History of the Controversial Fire That Led to the Rise of Nazi Germany - 55 pages
3. (1934) The Night of the Long Knives: The History and Legacy of Adolf Hitler's Notorious Purge of the SA - 46 pages
4. (1938) The Munich Agreement of 1938: The History of the Peace Pact that Failed to Prevent World War II - 69 pages
5. (1938) Kristallnacht: The History and Legacy of Nazi Germany's Most Notorious Pogrom - 48 pages

They are listed in chronological order of the events. I have also reviewed these.

Now it seems they're going on to the period of the beginning of the war with these:

6. (1939) The Start of World War II: The History of the Events that Culminated with Nazi Germany's Invasion of Poland
7. (1940) The Fall of France: The History of Nazi Germany's Invasion and Conquest of France During World War II
8. (1940) The Miracle of Dunkirk: The History of the World War II Battle and Evacuation that Helped Save Britain from Nazi Germany

This is a short account but goes straight to important points and quotes well known sources such as Martin Gilbert and William Shirer. This book seemed to me above the same editors' average, presenting a lot of unheard of information, although it draws a lot on some other titles like "The Munich Agreement of 1938" on the "appeasement" and other issues.

I would highlight:

- the background and preparations by Poland;
- the description of the whole Poland invasion campaign and Polish resistance;
- the information on historical myths about Polish defenders on horseback attacking tanks;
- interesting assessments and analysis.

Amy says

Informative

Good continuation of events from "The Rise of Nazi Germany: The History of the Events That Brought Adolf Hitler to Power" which I read before this. It was a little dry in some areas and took a bit of reading for me to get invested in, but it was good nonetheless.

Vikas Datta says

Interesting take on the start of a most ruinous war...

David says

WWII , the Beginning

Thoroughly enjoyed reading the history of the inept leadership that was totally unprepared to meet a stronger more powerful opponent. The enemy of my enemy is my friend, not always.

Jeff Wombold says

This was a very fast read, much shorter than I first imagined. Although it was a short synapses of the events that led up to the start of world war II, it was still worth a read, and I learned a great deal from it.

Senthil says

This time is no different. Why U.S was proactive in taking measures against Russia such as sanctions during the Ukrainian crises, because if this kind of sanctions was taken by the then PM of England against Germany during the initial aggression shown by Hitler, the history of world would have been different and it shows the important lesson which the world leaders have learnt from the failure of Munich agreement.

Anil Swarup says

Another interesting book from the Editors outlining the events that led to the Second World War. The estimation of Hitler is spot on. To begin with "Hitler's actions seem less like those of an irresponsible rogue leader daring the British to stop him than and more like those of a man who deemed a tacit agreement existed between the European imperial powers that would allow anti-slavic military action so long as the Germans took care not to disturb the overseas possessions of England and France." The deceitful ways of the Fuhrer come out eloquently as he went on to "annex" Austria and then tricked Chamberlain into celebrating peace through the Munich Agreement that, in the words of Churchill "sustained a defeat without a war". So much has already been written about the how Poland fought and resist the German invasion but this book provides some vivid details of such resistance before the country succumbed to the dual onslaught from the Germans and the Soviets.
