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Unit Eight, Section One: Hitler’s Lightning War

After his moves into the Rhineland in March 1936, Austria in March 1938 and Czechoslovakia in September 1938 and March 1939, Hitler turned his eyes to Poland. On April 28, 1939, Hitler spoke before the government and demanded that land taken from Germany by Poland in World War I be returned.

Germany then signed a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939 – promising not to attack each other. After signing this pact, Hitler moved ahead with plans to conquer Poland and invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. The invasion of Poland unleashed World War II.

**Hitler’s Lightning War**



BLITZKRIEG:



Suddenly, on April 9, 1940, Hitler launched a surprise invasion of Denmark and Norway. He planned to build bases along the Norwegian and Danish coasts to strike at Great Britain. In just four hours after the attack, Denmark fell. Two months later, Norway surrendered as well.

**Battle For France**



**Battle for Great Britain**



WINSTON CHURCHILL:



BATTLE OF BRITAIN:



**The Eastern Front**

The stubborn resistance of the British in the Battle of Britain caused a shift in Hitler’s strategy in Europe. Although the resistance surprised Hitler, it did not defeat him. He would deal with Great Britain later. Instead, he turned his attention east to the Balkans and the Mediterranean area – and to the ultimate prize, the Soviet Union.