

Chronology, events and people

On 3 September Britain declared war on Nazi Germany after Chamberlain's policy of **appeasement** failed and Hitler invaded Poland. The Nazis used **blitzkrieg** tactics to invade other countries in Europe, including France, the Netherlands and Belgium, so British forces had to retreat from mainland Europe; many were rescued from **Dunkirk** and by June of 1940 Britain was fighting alone. The German **Luftwaffe** tried to destroy the **RAF**, but Britain fought back and won the **Battle of Britain**, which was fought in the air.

Britain had to rely on the USA for many goods; this involved risky Atlantic crossings where British ships were targeted by German **u-boats**. This was called the **Battle of the Atlantic** and at this stage America had not joined the war. Supplies were often lost and on the **Home Front** more and more everyday goods and food were **rationed** and children were **evacuated**. At the same time British towns and cities were being bombed night after night by the German **Luftwaffe** in the **Blitz**.

In June 1941 Hitler invaded his **ally** the **Soviet Union**, so Britain had another ally and German forces were beaten by the freezing Russian winter.

In December 1941 Japan launched a surprise air attack on **Pearl Harbor**, a US naval base in Hawaii. This brought America into the war and was a **turning point** as it strengthened Britain's position in the war.

On 6 June 1944: **D-Day** when allied forces from Britain, USA and Canada landed on beaches in Normandy, France and started to push Nazi forces back, but the German did not give up easily, and there was massive loss of life on both sides. By Spring 1945 the German army was in retreat. As British and American forces moved east, the Russian army moved west. As they went, concentration and labour camps were discovered and the full horror of the **Holocaust** was seen by shocked allied soldiers. Germany finally surrendered on **7 May 1945** after Hitler had committed suicide some days before; this is called **VE Day** (victory in Europe).

Fighting continued in the Far East until America dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August. On **14 August** Japan surrendered and the Second World War was finally over.

Key words

Ally / Allies –a country or countries that fought with Britain in WW2.

Appeasement –British policy of giving in to Hitler's demands in the 1930s to avoid another war.

Artillery –heavy weaponry.

Atom or **H-Bomb** –an early nuclear bomb, dropped on Japan in 1945.

Blitzkrieg –'Lightning war' a German tactic of attacking using tanks and aircraft.

Civilian –people not fighting in the armed forces, such as women and children.

Communist –a belief that all property should be owned by 'the community' ie everyone.

D-Day –Operation Overlord; the invasion of France by the **allies** on 6 June 1944.

Evacuation –sending children out of towns and cities to live in safety in the countryside.

Holocaust –the event whereby millions of Jews, gypsies, gay and mentally ill people were murdered by the Nazis.

Home Front –Britain and the **civilian** population during war time.

Luftwaffe –the German air force.

Merchant navy –ships and seamen who brought supplies to Britain.

Nazi –the far right wing politics of Adolf Hitler and his supporters.

Panzer –German word for a tank.

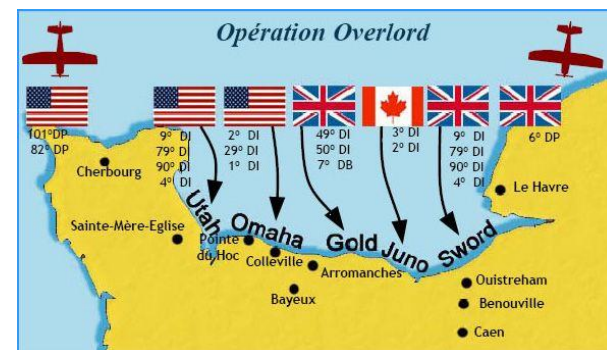
RAF –The Royal Air Force (British).

Rationing –the system of fair food allowances for civilians.

Soviet Union (USSR) –a huge **communist** country often called Russia.

SS –Elite Nazi combat troops headed by Himmler, and often ran death camps.

U-boat –German word for a submarine.

Key concepts and tasks

- ✓ Identify differences in tactics and weapons from WW1 to WW2.
- ✓ Gain an overview of the Second World War.
- ✓ Interpret government propaganda and assess its effectiveness.
- ✓ Explain why the bombing of Pearl Harbor was a turning point.
- ✓ Describe the key events from D-Day to VE Day.
- ✓ Identify the arguments for and against dropping the atomic bomb and arrive at a judgement.