

Hitler's Invasion of Poland Kicked Off World War II 20 Years Ago

Events Leading Up To Conflict Recalled

Editor's Note: On Sept. 1, 1939, Adolf Hitler unleashed the blitzkrieg invasion of Poland that touched off World War II. Joseph W. Grigg, now Chief European Correspondent of UPI, was a member of the Berlin bureau of the United Press the day war broke out. Just 20 years ago. Later, after Pearl Harbor, he was interned by the Nazis for five months.

By JOSEPH W. GRIGG
UPI Correspondent
London—UPI—At 5:45 on the morning of Friday, Sept. 1, 1939, the "Hellschreiber" teletype printer of the official German news agency in the Berlin office of United Press began grinding out a communique.

"Proclamation to the German armed forces," it began. Over the streets of Berlin a gray rain-swept dawn was breaking. The few early workers hurrying along the broad, empty expanse of Unter den Linden saw the street lamps go out and continued on their way.

They did not know it would be six years before the lights went on again in Europe. They did not know that at that moment two air fleets of Nazi Heinkel and Dornier bombers were sweeping across Germany's eastern frontiers to unload destruction and death on sleeping and defenseless Polish cities.

Hitler's Proclamation
In the great mausoleum-like Reich Chancellery, which he had built in the hope of perpetuating himself for all time in concrete and yellow plaster and bronze, the man who signed that communique, Adolf Hitler, Fuehrer and Reich Chancellor and Supreme Commander of the German Armed Forces, went to bed.

He had just signed the proclamation which set his armies and air fleets in motion across the Polish frontier and unleashed the second World War.

For weeks Europe had hurtled down the precipitous slope to war. All communications between Berlin and the Western European capitals had ceased. International trains stopped running, long distance telephone lines were cut.

In London and Paris the blackout already had begun and anti-aircraft guns were mounted on roof tops. Tens of thousands of women and children were being evacuated hurriedly from the cities. Bomb-proof trenches were dug in London's parks and gas masks were distributed to every Briton.

Rearmed Illegally
What touched off the crisis? Since he came to power in 1933 Hitler had rearmed Germany illegally, reoccupied the demilitarized Rhineland, seized Austria, Memel and Czechoslovakia.

Now he was demanding restoration of the Free City of Danzig and a road through the corridor of Polish territory that separated East Prussia from the rest of Germany.

Earlier that summer Hitler's Propaganda Minister, little club-footed Dr. Paul Joseph Goebbels, taking the salute at a mass torchlight demonstration of thousands of swastika-toting Nazis in Danzig, told this correspondent with supreme confidence: "There will be no war. Britain is bluffing. Anyhow, she is too cowardly and weak to fight."

Hitler believed that, too. Eleven days before he gave the order to his armies to march into Poland, Hitler pulled out what he believed to be his ace-in-the-hole. On the sultry night of Aug. 21 he rocked the world with the announcement that he was sending his Foreign Minister, former champagne salesman Joachim von Ribbentrop, to Moscow to sign a non-aggression pact with the Soviets.

War Inevitable
From that moment war became inevitable. The pact meant Hitler could attack Poland without fear that Russia would come to its aid.

On Aug. 24 Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain told the British House of Commons that—pact or no pact—Britain would fulfill her treaty pledges to defend Poland if she were attacked.

That same day the British and French began leaving Berlin. Next day, Aug. 25, Nazi Germany secretly completed its mobilization. At the same time, Hitler made a last desperate bid to bribe Britain into staying neutral when he attacked Poland.

He summoned Britain's ambassador, Sir Neville Henderson, to the Chancellery and offered him a treaty under which Nazi Germany would "guarantee" with its own armed forces the integrity of the British Empire. In return,

he demanded restoration of Germany's former colonies and a free hand to attack Poland.

On Aug. 26 the German people, still blissfully unaware of the crisis about to engulf them and, ultimately, the whole world, received their first rude warning of what was in store. The government announced cancellation of the annual Nazi Party Congress at Nuremberg.

Rationing Told
A still ruder awakening came the next day—Sunday—when the Berlin papers published a government announcement imposing strict rationing on food, clothing, shoes and soap.

All over Berlin, correspondents saw anti-aircraft guns being mounted on tall buildings. Sandbags were piled in front of plate glass windows. Crowds of young men carrying suitcases and mobilization orders jammed Berlin's main railroad stations. Massed Nazi bomber squadrons roared over the Olympic stadium swimming pool and the Wannsee lake beaches.

On Aug. 26, Henderson flew back to Berlin with a note from Chamberlain accepting the broad idea of an Anglo-German "slate wiping," but reiterating Britain's commitments to Poland.

Demands Increased
But on Aug. 29 Hitler upped his demands. He handed Henderson another note announcing that he no longer would be satisfied with the return of the city of Danzig and a road through the so-called Polish corridor. He demanded immediate surrender of the whole corridor by Poland and gave the Polish government 24 hours to send a plenipotentiary to Berlin to sign the surrender.

The German ultimatum was passed on to Poland, but she already had ordered general mobilization herself.

At midnight on Aug. 30 Henderson drove to the Nazi Foreign Office, told Ribbentrop that Poland had been informed of Hitler's demands and added that the British government considered it impossible for a Polish plenipotentiary to reach Berlin on time. Ribbentrop's answer was to read to Henderson in German a long document outlining what would have been Germany's terms if a Polish plenipotentiary had reached Berlin on time.

Unique Report Published
Late the next evening, Aug. 31, the text of Hitler's terms was published. At that very moment the official German news agency put out an utterly untrue report of an attack by Polish irregulars on the Gleiwitz radio station in Silesia. This provided Hitler with his excuse to announce that the Nazi armed forces were "firing back."

The invasion orders already had been given. At 5:45 a.m. on Sept. 1 World War II began.

At 10 a.m. that same day, Hitler appeared before a specially summoned session of the rubber-stamp Nazi Reichstag.

He looked pale and haggard and his face was strained from lack of sleep. For the first time he wore a sort of field-gray uniform in place of his usual brown tunic and swastika armband.

Dwarfed by a huge golden eagle surmounted by a black swastika, he cried, "I will wage this struggle, no matter against whom, until the security of the Reich and its rights have been guaranteed."

Berlin Blacked Out
That night Berlin was blacked out for the first time and there was a practice air raid alert.

The British and French ambassadors handed Ribbentrop identical notes demanding withdrawal of the Nazi forces from Poland. Next day Benito Mussolini of Italy tried to stage another "Munich" conference and France declared general mobilization.

The Nazi war machine slashed into Poland against almost no effective resistance. At 9 a.m. on Sunday, Sept. 3, the British ambassador paid a final call on Ribbentrop and handed him an ultimatum warning that if Germany did not withdraw her troops within two hours, Britain would consider herself in a state of war with Germany.

Telephone Call From Warsaw Marked End of Road for U.S. Isolationists

By STEWART HENSLEY
UPI Correspondent
Washington—UPI—President Franklin D. Roosevelt was awakened at 2:50 a.m. on the morning of Sept. 1, 1939, by a telephone call from Warsaw which marked the beginning of the end of an era for the United States.

On the phone was the American ambassador to Poland, Anthony Joseph Drexel Biddle Jr., to report that Adolf Hitler had sent his Wehrmacht smashing into Poland and Nazi warplanes were bombing Gdynia, Cracow and Katowice.

The war Hitler touched off just 20 years ago ended, for him, less than six years later in a blazing bunker in Berlin,

his dreams of conquest buried with him in the rubble of the German capital.

For the United States it ended in September, 1945, with the surrender of the Japanese aboard the battleship Missouri in Tokyo bay. The Germans had given up to the victorious Allies four months earlier.

U. S. Most Powerful
The U. S. defense department estimates the total cost of the war to this country alone at \$31,350,000,000. It brought 16,112,566 Americans under arms and left more than 400,000 of them dead and 670,000 wounded.

At the end of the war, the United States undisputedly was the most powerful nation

on earth. With this role came leadership of the free world and, eventually, the necessity to rally the non-Communist nations against Red expansion.

With it, too, came the end of any hopes that Americans might have had that they could ever again divorce themselves from trouble elsewhere in the world.

World of Tomorrow
In the late summer of 1939, hundreds of thousands of Americans were thronging the New York World's Fair with its "World of Tomorrow," unaware that many of them would find their "tomorrow" not among the shining scientific marvels shown there but on the bloody sands of North Africa, in the violence of the Ardennes bulge or the blazing fury of the Coral Sea.

To most Americans, Poland was still a remote and troublesome country in an area where trouble was the rule. There was an air of unreality about the black newspaper headlines telling of the relentless advance of the Wehrmacht.

It was to be almost two years before the Japanese sneak attack on Pearl Harbor finally brought the United States into the actual shooting. But historians generally agree that the die was cast irrevocably when Hitler brushed aside Roosevelt's peace appeals, defied British and French warnings and struck east 20 years ago.

The roots of the conflict actually went back to 1919, to the patchwork treaty of Versailles in which the Allies tried to restore the balance of power in Europe which Bismarck had upset when he united the German states in 1871.

Began in 1931
Actual hostilities dated from 1931 when Japan invaded China and began her campaign to bring that vast country to its knees.

The handwriting on the wall became clearer as Italy invaded Ethiopia, Germany forced the Anschluss of Austria and then, after the Munich conference gobbled up Czechoslovakia.

It was at this point that Hitler said he had "no more territorial demands in Europe." But in March, 1939, he issued his "demands" on Poland, which eventually meant war.

During the spring and summer of 1939, while urging caution on Hitler as well as the Poles, Roosevelt had been trying unsuccessfully to get Congress to amend the Neutrality Act to permit easier shipment of war materials to Britain, France and other traditional allies.

Survey Ordered
He also had been making plans to return from Europe the 100,000 Americans, including tourists, who were there and had ordered a survey of the nation's war industry potential.

All these actions were strongly opposed by sincere isolationists, as well as by

Death Came To War Leaders in Varied Circumstances

London—UPI—Adolf Hitler killed himself in the stinking ruins of his Berlin bunker while the boom of Russian guns tolled the death knell of his empire—

Benito Mussolini was shot and strung up by the heels in an Italian gas station—

Franklin D. Roosevelt died with victory in Europe only days away—

Joseph Stalin lived long enough to plunge peace into the cold war—

Only Winston Churchill of the "big five" is still alive. At the age of 85, he spent the last summer months of 1959 cruising around the Mediterranean on a Greek millionaire's yacht.

What of the others whose thoughts and actions of 20 years ago changed the history of the world?

Bitter, Broken Man
In Britain in 1939, the names on everyone's lips were Churchill, Chamberlain and Eden.

Neville Chamberlain died a bitter and broken man not long after war was declared, his spirit shattered by forces beyond his control.

Anthony Eden survived as a power in British politics until 1956 and another war, this time against the Egyptians and Gamal Abdel Nasser. It was a war that was a disaster, and Eden retired in January, 1957, a broken and disillusioned man.

In France, the greatest name of them all emerged from the war years as an air-conquering hero but it was not until 1958 that Gen. Charles de Gaulle finally found the niche in post-war France that had evaded him for so long.

Edouard Daladier, French Premier at the time of Munich, remained in politics after the war, most of which he spent in Pétainist or German internment. He was swept out of political life by the Gaullist landslide last fall because of his opposition to Gaullism.

Marshal Phillip Pétain, the hero of Verdun and the traitor of Vichy, was sentenced to death for treason, had the sentence commuted to life imprisonment and died in exile in 1951 at the age of 93.

Pierre Laval died before a French firing squad when the war ended.

Most of the big Nazis killed themselves or died on the gallows. Paul Joseph Goebbels committed suicide on the same night and in the same bunker as Hitler.

Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, hero of the battle of Africa, "committed suicide" at gunpoint for being involved in the plot against Hitler's life. His deputy at the time of the Allied invasion of France, Gen. Hans Spiedel, is now one of the top commanders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Victor Emmanuel II, a shy, drab little man who appointed Mussolini Premier of Italy after the 1922 march on Rome and who later dismissed Mussolini after the Allied sweep into Italy, died in exile in Egypt on Dec. 28, 1947.

Pietro Badoglio, who took over from Il Duce and signed the armistice with the Allies on Sept. 8, 1942, died at the age of 85 on Nov. 1, 1956, in his native village of Grazzano.

One of the tragedies of European royalty was King Leopold III of Belgium, who remained in his country during the occupation and later was accused of collaboration. He was forced to abdicate in favor of his son, Baudouin, in 1951, and is now living at Laeken Palace near Brussels.

Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, who fled to exile in London when war broke out, abdicated in 1948 because of ill health and now lives in the Dutch countryside.

Text of Hitler's Proclamation Triggering War

London—UPI—Here is the text of Adolf Hitler's "Proclamation to the German armed forces" of Sept. 1, 1939, that triggered World War II:

"The Polish state has rejected the peaceful settlement of our relations as neighbors, for which I have striven, and instead has appealed to arms.

"The Germans in Poland are being persecuted with bloody terror and driven from farm and home. A series of frontier violations, intolerable for a great power, proves that the Poles no longer are willing to respect the German Reich frontier. There remains for me no other means of putting an end to the madness but from now on to meet force with force.

Stern Determination
"The German armed forces will wage with stern determination the struggle for the honor of the German people that once more has arisen.

"I expect that every soldier, mindful of the great tradition of eternal German soldierhood, will fulfill his duty to the last.

"Remember always and in all situations that you are representatives of National Socialist Greater Germany.

"Long live our people and our Reich."



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Cycle of Errors Committed By West Said Basic War Cause

Editor's Note: What were the basic causes of World War II? Few people are as well qualified to answer that question as Paul Reynaud. A longtime member of the French National Assembly and a veteran cabinet minister, Reynaud fought to strengthen the French army during the 1920's. After the Munich agreement of 1938, he quit the French cabinet in disgust but returned a few months later as Minister of Finance to push his country's rearmament program. He became Premier on March 20, 1940, shortly before the Nazi invasion that swept through France. Reynaud refused to surrender and resigned. The Vichy Government sent him to prison, where he spent the rest of the war.

By PAUL REYNAUD
(Written for UPI)
Paris—UPI—Demagogues are the cancer of democracy, and demagogues led to the blunders that permitted Adolf Hitler to start the second World War just 19 years after the first.

The first blunder was the refusal of the United States Senate to join the League of Nations. Had America joined the League, she would have been obliged by the force of circumstance to assume a role of leadership. The combined power of the Western countries could then have avoided World War II.

World Problem
With America in the League the problem of peace would not have been simply a Franco-German problem with Britain in the background. It would have been a world problem.

The demagogues who preached isolation to the American people, and the senators who followed them were the first who were responsible for World War II.

France, too, committed a grave error. She lived next door to a Germany which had not accepted the Versailles Treaty and which obviously wanted to rearm in order to destroy France. To meet this danger, France should have created an army capable of taking the offensive with lightning action.

However, on the advice of Marshal Pétain, France clung to the heavy, defensive army of trench warfare.

Predicted Invasions
As far back as July 4, 1925, I wrote in the "Weekly Review" that if in France maintained this policy, we would one day see "the Ger-

man Army shake hands with the Red Army over the corpse of Poland" and that then, doubling back on France, the German army would invade us, too.

That is what happened 15 years later.

But the French demagogues knowing that our exhausted people wanted only to quietly recover their strength told them: "If a new war breaks out, a defensive war fought behind the Maginot Line will cause fewer losses than an offensive war."

What was the result? Hitler took Austria, permitting his army to threaten the flank of the Czech "Maginot Line."

Hitler moved on Czechoslovakia, whom France and Britain abandoned at Munich.

The German Army did, in fact, shake hands with the Red Army over the corpse of Poland.

When Hitler unleashed his blitzkrieg against France, the outmoded French army—a defensive army—was just as incapable of protecting its own soil as it had been of attacking the aggressors of its allies.

United States Watched
The United States, believing itself sheltered behind its ocean, watched without making a move while Hitler performed four successive operations.

How did the West react as Hitler carried out his tragic drama?
—As if the Hitlerian ogre could be pacified if it were given something to eat. Witness these events:
—Lord Runciman, acting in Britain's name, went and

counseled the Czechs to give the Sudetenland to Hitler.

—Chamberlain, carrying his famous umbrella, went to make conciliatory proposals to Hitler at Bad Godesberg.

—Chamberlain and Daladier went to Munich to conclude with Hitler an agreement whose effect was to put Czechoslovakia into her tomb.

Let it be said that Britain had the merit to declare that she would go to war if Hitler attacked Poland. But again the work of the demagogues had done its evil; they had prevented Britain from arming sufficiently, despite the warnings of Winston Churchill.

To complete the cycle of errors committed by the Western countries before and during the war, there was the armistice that Marshal Pétain signed with Nazi Germany. I opposed this not only because France and Britain had agreed to sign no separate truces, but because I wanted France to continue in the struggle so that it could continue to have its say during the war.

Beware of Cancer
If France had conserved a free government and had been present at Yalta, her representative would have supported Churchill against Roosevelt and we would not now be receiving the periodic threats of Mr. Khrushchev over Berlin, which the Allies made into an island in a Communist sea.

These are the errors which were committed. They are due to the demagoguery of some and the weakness of others.

Let us beware of our common cancer.

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