OCMUNC XI:

GERMAN INVASION OF POLAND IN 1939

-Historical Security Council-
Introduction

On August 31st, 1939 Adolf Hitler, despite the looming threat of British and French intervention, gives the order to attack the nation of Poland. In the hours that follow, German armies are moved into the frontier as a full attack is being prepared. By nightfall, the plans were in place. German S.S. officers created a feign invasion of Germany by the Poles in an attempt to gain domestic support and to utilize as political propaganda. The German government publicized the “attack” as an unforgivable act of aggression. By 4:45AM the following morning, close to 1.5 million German troops invade Poland along its 1,750-mile border with German-controlled territory. Simultaneously, the German Luftwaffe bombed Polish airfields while German warships and U-boats attacked Polish naval forces in the Baltic Sea. It would take only two days for the United Kingdom and France to declare war on the Third Reich. At 11:15 a.m. on September 3rd, merely minutes after the expiration of the British ultimatum, Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain came on national radio to announce that Britain was at war with Germany. Australia, New Zealand, and India immediately followed suit. By the end of the day, the French ultimatum expired, and at 5:00 p.m. France declared war on Germany. The European phase of World War II had begun.

Council

The Historical Security Council for OCMUNC XI will feature fifteen nations. The nations in attendance will be Argentina, Brazil, the Republic of China, Egypt, the French Republic, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Poland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics; nations in bold are the permanent five and do have veto power. We are well aware that the United Nations had not yet been created in 1939, and it is the duty of the body to create a resolution and act as a delegation of the UN, had it existed. Your role as a delegate in the United Nations Security Council of 1939
is to react to this situation in a diplomatic fashion. You must protect regional and global safety while not infringing on the rights of any nation. The first day of our conference will officially be the night of August 31st, 1939. As our council progresses, events take place all over the world. Be prepared to deal with the current situation as well as others that may arise.

History

The end of World War I was signaled when an armistice with Germany went into effect November 11, 1918. Though it was not a technical surrender it required the cessation of hostilities and the return of German troops. While the armistice ended the fighting, it took six months of negotiations at the Paris Peace Conference to conclude the peace treaty. After the Paris Peace Conference of 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was created which demanded that Germany accept responsibility for beginning the war and required that they pay economic reparations. Not only did the treaty affect Germany’s economy, but it also reduced the German army to 100,000 soldiers.

Beginning in 1920, Germany tried to recover from the war by way of social spending. The country began creating transportation projects and modernizing power plants all in a goal to decrease unemployment rate but the elevating amounts of money which were used for these projects combined with plummeting revenues caused continuing deficits. As a way to pay for their reparation payments that they could not afford, Germany began printing exaggerated amounts of money which led them into a state of super inflation. Searching for a leader in their country that needed help, citizens of Germany began to look to Adolf Hitler. Hitler first entered politics when he joined the political party known as German Workers’ Party in 1919. This party was formed after World War I and opposed the Treaty of Versailles as well as advocated extreme
nationalism. In 1920, the name of the party was changed to the National Socialist German Workers’ Party, better known as the Nazi Party. Throughout 1920, Hitler began to lecture in several places on topics such as Jews, the Treaty of Versailles, and political phenomena. His actions gained support for the party and soon there were over 2,000 members.

In June 1921, a mutiny broke out within the Nazi Party in which executive committee members wished to merge with the rival German Socialist Party. Hitler threatened to put in his resignation, therefore terminating the party, however, in the following days he spoke to several packed houses to defend himself. Ultimately, this resulted in him becoming the party chairman.

In 1922 and early 1923, Hitler formed two organizations known as the Jugendband, which would be later known as the Hitler Youth, and the Stabswache. A turning point arrived when Hitler led the Beer Hall Putsch, an attempted coup d’etat which he saw as the best way to seize control of the country. Sixteen party members and four police officers were killed in the failed coup and as a result, Hitler was put on trial for high treason which gained him much public attention. Hitler was convicted for five years and began work on his novel, Mein Kampf in which he outlined his political ideology and his future plans for Germany.

Hitler was later released in December of the same year. Beginning in 1925, Mein Kampf was published and began to be viewed as the ideological base for the Nazi Party. Hitler returned to the party and began reorganizing it in order to later gain political control of Germany. His strategy was to develop a highly centralized and structured party that could compete in Germany’s future elections. Overall 1925 was a year in which Hitler spent preparing the Nazi Party.

By May of 1926, Hitler had assumed the title of supreme leader by ending all infighting between factions of the Nazi Party. Due to his leadership, the party rose in numbers. In 1927, he gave a speech at
the Nuremberg Rally which acted as the annual meeting for the Nazi Party. Mentioning the point that the party was not only a political platform but a political faith again gained more support for his cause. Though the Nazi Party was beginning to gain support, it was still viewed as insignificant party as seen in the Reichstag Elections of 1928 in which the Nazis only had twelve seats and less than 3% of the population voted for the Nazis.

Following the stock market crash in the United States in 1929, the world economy plummeted. In Germany, companies went bankrupt, banks failed and people instantly lost their life's savings. Jobs were scarce while poverty and starvation became a reality for a large number of people. Governments seemed powerless against the worldwide economic collapse and people began to panic. The Great Depression had begun. For Adolf Hitler, it was time to put his plan in place, a plan which had been waiting far too long. He would use this emergency as a means to gain support for his party, the Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, or Nazi Party. The group promised more jobs and an overall strengthening of the economy. Many citizens, with nowhere else to turn, decided that the NSDAP, as the group was commonly referred to, was capable of restoring order, quelling civil unrest, and improving Germany's international reputation.

The Nazi party would use 1930 to make its move. The mastermind of the operation, Joseph Goebbels planned thousands of meetings, speeches, and parades all with the common goal of gaining popularity for Adolf Hitler. They would find that the melancholy people of Germany were willing to listen to anything after two years of economic crisis. On Election Day September 14, 1930, the Nazis received 6,371,000 votes – over eighteen percent of the total – which equaled 107 seats in the German Reichstag. It was a stunning victory for Hitler. Overnight, the Nazi Party went from the smallest to the second largest political party in Germany.
After the elections of 1932, the Nazi party was the largest in the Reichstag. Such success coupled with Hitler’s boosted ego would lead to his most aggressive act yet, running for President. Since the Stock Market Crash of 1929, German society had begun to unravel. Fighting erupted in the streets of Berlin and starvation was at its peak. Poverty had spread to each corner of the country and the citizens of Germany had gotten nothing but indecision from their elected leaders. The little hope the German people still had remained in their current President, Paul von Hindenburg. In 1932, an election was required by law, however, Hindenburg, the glue holding the democracy together, decided his deteriorating health was too poor for him to run. Had he been victorious in this election, he would have been President into his 92nd birthday. Despite his poor health, Hindenburg reluctantly went against his original decision and decided to run for president. His campaign was very inactive and was dependent upon his reputation and former voters. In the presidential election held on March 13, 1932, Hitler got over eleven million votes (11,339,446) or 30% of the total. Hindenburg got 18,651,497 votes or 49%. Hindenburg failed to get the absolute majority he needed, making a run-off election necessary. Despite their disappointment, the Nazi party planned a hectic schedule for Hitler with the run-off election taking place within a month. On Sunday, April 10, 1932, the people voted. They gave Hitler 13,418,547 or 36%, an increase of two million, and Hindenburg 19,359,983 or 53%, an increase of under a million. Hindenburg would rule Germany for another seven years despite his health. Germany was in shambles, but the Nazi party showed it was a force to be reckoned with.

By the Spring of 1932, there were roughly 400,000 stormtroopers under the command of Nazi Chief Ernst Röhm. In April of 1932, Heinrich Bruening, Chancellor of Germany, passed Article 48 of the constitution and issued a decree banning the SA and SS all across Germany. Although it was met with extreme Nazi opposition, Hitler knew that the republic would soon fall. After
meeting with Kurt von Schleicher, an army officer with hopes of leading Germany, Hitler was offered a proposal. The proposal included a lifting of the band on the SA and SS (the revolutionary Nazi armies), a dissolved Reichstag, new elections, and Chancellor Bruening would be dumped. This proposal could only survive under one condition: If Hitler would support him in a conservative nationalist government. Hitler agreed. It took only until noon on January 30, 1933 for Adolf Hitler to be named German Chancellor. A new chapter of German leadership had begun.

"I will employ my strength for the welfare of the German people, protect the Constitution and laws of the German people, conscientiously discharge the duties imposed on me, and conduct my affairs of office impartially and with justice to everyone," swore Adolf Hitler. Out of eleven positions in his cabinet, only three were held by Nazis. However, those around him continued to underestimate his power. On his first day as chancellor, Hitler manipulated Hindenburg into dissolving the Reichstag and calling for the new elections he had wanted – to be held on March 5th, 1933. Hitler repeatedly lied to generals, telling them that no efforts would be made to replace the standing army with stormtroopers. Within months, President Hindenburg had become one of Hitler’s puppets, authorizing anything that Hitler wanted. Herman Göring, Minister of the Interior, and also a Nazi, replaced a majority of the police officials with those loyal to the Nazi cause. In addition, he ordered them to be merciless to anyone deemed derogatory to the state, specifically, communists. On February 22nd, Göring created a police force of 50,000, most of which were Nazis. Five days later, the Reichstag would be burnt to the ground. The actual events are unknown, however it is widely believed that storm troopers aided a Communist arsonist. In the following weeks, restrictions would be placed on the people of Germany and many political prisoners would be captured. On Election Day, March 5th, the Nazis received only 44% of the
vote. The last free elections to take place in Germany would show that a legal dictatorship was well within reach.

Following Election Day, a planned takeover of the governments within Germany was being assembled. Political enemies were being arrested in large numbers. In late March, two final decrees would be hastily signed by President Hindenburg. First, full pardons were given to all Nazis currently in prison. The second decree authorized by the aging president allowed for the arrest of anyone suspected of maliciously criticizing the government and the Nazi Party. Days later, the Enabling Act would be forcibly passed by the new Reichstag, allowing Hitler to legally dissolve the current government and legally establish his dictatorship. From that day on, the Reichstag would become essentially useless, as Hitler could unilaterally pass anything he pleased. Democracy in Germany was now a thing of the past.

The next several years leading up to World War II would be a blur of complete Nazi control and oppression. Only a week after the Enabling Act was passed, a national boycott of Jewish-owned shops and stores had been put into effect. Several days later, "The Law of the Restoration of the Civil Service" was introduced which made "Aryanism" a necessary requirement to hold a civil service position. All Jews holding such positions were dismissed or forced into early retirement. By the Spring of 1933, the Gestapo had been born and the famous Burning of Books had taken place. Frighteningly enough, many of those who had taken place in the book burning were university students. Hitler’s early presence in the German youth was paying dividends as the new era of citizens were innately racist. Also in Spring of the same year, the first concentration camp had opened, Dachau.
If there was any opposition whatsoever to Hitler, it came in the form of his own SA troops, led by Ernst Röhm. Consisting of roughly 100,000 standing men, they had the power to crush Hitler’s dictatorship whenever they pleased. In order to maintain his position, Hitler needed their support. As the SA became more and more gangster-like, the public got tired of them. In the Summer of 1934, Ernst Röhm would be arrested and eventually executed.

By late summer 1935, the street violence and demonstrations had ceased, however, the internal fighting only escalated and would soon come out at the annual Nuremberg Rally. At the rally of 1935, held from September 9th to the 15th, radicals would attempt to persuade Hitler to pass anti-Jewish laws which would oppress them to a degree which had not been reached yet. The first major law restricted Jews from marrying non-Jews, however, problems had arisen from that. Because of widespread intermarriage, there was confusion as to properly defining a Jewish person as such. In reply, a decree was passed two months later labeling a “Full Jew” as a person with at least three Jewish grandparents. Those with fewer than three grandparents were designated as Mischlinge (half-breeds), of which there were two degrees: First Degree Mischlinge – a person with two Jewish grandparents; Second Degree Mischlinge – a person with one Jewish grandparent. At the time, Hitler’s main goal was to look credible on the world stage and expand the borders of Germany as he had promised years before. In early 1936, he would take his first steps as Führer beyond the German border.

On March 15th, 1935, a cabinet meeting was held where the decision to mobilize the German army was officially made. The decision, which would openly defy the boundaries set by the Treaty of Versailles, would include the German army increasing its size to 550,000 men, also a violation. Although this information was made public, no action was taken by the French (who were in control of the Rhineland). The German army was given orders to retreat at the first sign
of French intervention, however, none ever came. Despite signing the Locarno Pact ensuring mutual assistance, neither the French nor the British made any offensive moves. Weeks later, on March 29th, a nationwide referendum was held in which 99 percent of the registered voters in Germany went to the polls and gave a 98.8 percent approval rating of Hitler’s reoccupation of the Rhineland. The Führer had reached new heights of popularity.

Dreams of finally attaining Lebensraum, or living space, for Germany had seemed a possibility following Hitler’s invasion of the Rhineland in 1936 and his self-promotion to Army Commander in 1938. Austria was his first choice, a small, weak, and diplomatically isolated nation which was nearby and could not adequately defend itself. Saturday, March 12, 1938, was the day German soldiers in tanks and armored vehicles rolled across the German-Austrian border. There, they met no resistance and the French and British acted the same way they did when the Rhineland was invaded. Many of Austria’s seven million ethnic Germans had become extremely invested in the rising star of Germany and its dynamic Führer; therefore, many soldiers were even met with adulation. Vienna, with its large Jewish population, was the site of heavy anti-Jewish violence by the SS. Hitler had taken Austria without firing a single bullet. Hermann Göring would assure the nervous Czech government (which was now surrounded by the German Army on three sides), "I give you my word of honor that Czechoslovakia has nothing to fear from the Reich."

On November 9th, 1938, the largest instance of anti-Semitic violence would occur in Germany. A reported 7,500 Jewish businesses destroyed, 267 synagogues burned (with 177 totally destroyed) and 91 Jews murdered during Kristallnacht, or the “night of broken glass”. Following that night, more decrees were passed essentially excluding Jewish people from life in Germany altogether. Following Kristallnacht, Hitler would sign the Munich Agreement in September of
1938, a settlement reached by Germany, Great Britain, France, and Italy which allowed German annexation of the Sudetenland in western Czechoslovakia. Although this region was only a portion of Czechoslovakia, it contained 66 percent of Czechoslovakia's coal, 70 percent of its iron and steel, and 70 percent of its electrical power. Without such resources, a Nazi takeover was inevitable.

Though given a portion of Czechoslovakia by means of a diplomatic pact, Hitler had always wanted the entire nation for his country. As the German government had done in the past, they would start by encouraging political unrest inside the area of Hitler’s choice. At the same time, Goebbels would design a propaganda campaign aimed at real creating wrongs committed against local Germans. On March 15th, 1939, Germany would make its move. After Hitler threatened an entrance-by-force, the sickly Czech President, Emil Hacha, allowed free passage of German troops into the two remaining provinces of Czechoslovakia.

Despite a busy year on the German front, the fascist Italians had been notably quiet. Their premier, Benito Mussolini, was contemplating an allegiance to the German Reich, but his decision was taking time. His hesitation was mainly caused not by a difference in interest, but in technique. The Italians preferred to pick their targets carefully, specifically weak nations such as Ethiopia and Albania. Seemingly on a whim, Mussolini would eventually join the Nazi cause after the leaders from both nations spoke on May 6th, 1939. Hints from the Soviet Foreign Minister about aligning with the West led Hitler to ultimately sign a non-aggression pact with the USSR despite his hatred of Bolshevism. The Nazi-Soviet Pact would be the last major action taken by Hitler before the invasion of Poland.
Guiding Questions

1. What was your nation’s relationship with Germany prior to 1939?
2. Is there adequate evidence to support the assertion that Poland attacked Germany?
3. What was your nation’s response to the attack on Ethiopia by the Italians?
4. What are your nation’s military capabilities?
5. Who are your country’s economic, political, and military alliances with?
6. What was your nation’s response to the Munich Pact and the annexation of Austria?

Sources and Resources

http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-hossbach.htm
http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/germany-invades-poland
http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-boycott.htm
http://www.historyplace.com/worldwar2/triumph/tr-fuehrer.htm
http://www.open.edu/openlearn/history-the-arts/history/hitlers-rise-and-fall-timeline
http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/397522/Munich-Agreement
http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/nazis-take-czechoslovakia