

After Japan's violent attack on China in 1937, President Roosevelt criticized the Japanese aggression. The United States, however, continued to back away from intervention in foreign conflicts.

Despite a military alliance among France, Britain, and Poland, Germany invaded Poland in 1939. Britain and France declared war on Germany, and World War II had begun. The **Axis Powers** would come to include Germany, Italy, Japan, and several other nations. The Axis Powers fought the **Allies**, which included Britain, France, and eventually the Soviet Union, China, and the United States.

Germany used a new technique called **blitzkrieg**, or "lightning war." Tanks and planes attacked in a coordinated effort and quickly conquered Poland. In April 1940, Denmark and Norway fell to the German blitzkrieg. In May, Germany took the Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg, and then invaded France. The next month, Germany attacked Britain from the air.

Winston Churchill, the prime minister of Britain, hoped to convince America to join the Allies. Reports by news reporter Edward R. Murrow on the bombing of London shocked the American public. Murrow emphasized that the Germans were bombing civilians, not armies or military sites. Despite its isolationist policies, the United States moved slowly toward involvement. Congress passed the **Neutrality Act of 1939**. This law helped the Allies buy goods and munitions from the United States. Isolationists, however, believed that getting involved in a bloody European war would be wasteful and dangerous.

Even though most Americans wanted to remain neutral, President Roosevelt constantly argued for helping Britain. In early 1941, Congress approved the **Lend-Lease Act**. This act gave the President the power to sell, give, or lease weapons to protect the United States. In 1941, Roosevelt also met with Churchill to discuss the war. They signed the **Atlantic Charter**, a document that endorsed national self-determination and an international system of "general security." The agreement signaled the deepening alliance between the two nations. Hitler was not blind to American support of the Allies. In the fall of 1941, he ordered German U-boats to attack American ships. U.S. involvement in the war seemed inevitable.

Review Questions

1. What nations made up the Axis Powers?

2. What was President Roosevelt's position on the war in Europe?

READING CHECK

What is a blitzkrieg?

VOCABULARY STRATEGY

What does the word *coordinated* mean in the underlined sentence? What clues can you find in the surrounding words, phrases, or sentences? Circle the words in the underlined passage that could help you learn what *coordinated* means.

READING SKILL

Sequence List the countries Germany conquered by order of date.
