

**Why was Hitler able to conquer Western Europe so quickly by 1940?**



# WORLD WAR I



**Think back: How was WWI mainly fought?  
What were the tactics? Where? Etc...**



One of the new methods of warfare in WW2 was a tactic known as BLITZKRIEG. It was a Nazi tactic and literally means LIGHTNING WAR. Blitzkrieg was based on speed and surprise and needed a military force to be based around Light Tank units supported by planes and infantry (foot soldiers).



Tanks attacked quickly along the ground.



Aircraft hit strong points behind the lines causing panic and confusion.

Part of the Blitzkrieg plan was for the Germans to attack enemy civilians. The civilians would then run towards their own soldiers for help, their soldiers would not be able to fire their weapons. The Germans could then easily attack the enemy soldiers in the confusion and win easily.

This tactic worked well in France but did not work in Russia, where the Russian army were ordered to shoot at their own people in order to defeat the Germans.

#### Source A

“Unless you have experienced an attack of a dive-bomber you may fail to realise that bombers hurtling towards you are more effective than aircraft which carefully place bombs. The dive-bombers were particularly effective against civilians.” A modern historian.

Why were planes so useful in scaring civilians?

# With the enemy taken by surprise.....



- Paratroopers were dropped behind enemy lines
- Aircraft were destroyed on the ground.
- Telephone links, bridges, railways were cut.
- Soldiers became isolated and surrounded, the quickly surrendered.

# Meanwhile....



- The tanks raced across open countryside.
- They scavenged for petrol at deserted filling stations.
- Finally they formed a pincer movement and surrounded their enemy from the rear.

What can we learn from this clip about how the Nazis conquered Western Europe?



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GA-mkaKEqf4>

# Fill in the blanks

The word \_\_\_\_\_ means lightning war. The Germans used these surprise tactics to invade \_\_\_\_\_. The Germans used \_\_\_\_\_ to bomb cities from the sky. The \_\_\_\_\_ were very mobile and well armored. Aircraft could drop \_\_\_\_\_ behind enemy lines. German \_\_\_\_\_ could carry thousands of \_\_\_\_\_ quickly to the front line. Using these tactics, Germany easily defeated Poland within \_\_\_\_\_ weeks which led to the outbreak of \_\_\_\_\_.

Paratroopers

Blitzkrieg

Planes

Vehicles

Three

Tanks

Soldiers

WWII

Europe



Write a short front page story for a newspaper describing how the Nazis used Blitzkrieg



**▲ 1.** Airplanes bomb the troops, and all the army headquarters, bridges, roads and telephone exchanges behind the enemy front line.



**▲ 2.** Paratroopers and gliders land behind the enemy front line and cause chaos, capturing important bridges and buildings.



**▲ 3.** Groups of tanks, called Panzer units, attack the weakest part of the enemy line. Then they push far into the enemy, followed by soldiers in trucks.



**▲ 4.** The enemy's front line finds itself cut off from its supports, and surrenders.

# Germany invades Poland

The Germans bombed the Polish Cities. Then the German tanks and soldiers moved in. On 24<sup>th</sup> September 1939, 1,150 German planes bombed the City of Warsaw. 3 weeks later the Nazi's occupied Poland. The Blitzkrieg tactics seemed unstoppable.



# Germans invade Europe

In May 1940 Denmark, Holland, Belgium and France were invaded by the Nazi's. The German tanks cut through the Belgian forests and pushed the British and French armies back towards Dunkirk.



## What was Operation Barbarossa?

After Hitler had taken over France in 1940 he decided to invade Russia. He wanted to use the Blitzkrieg tactics here as well. To begin with this worked well and his troops made it to Moscow quickly. However, things soon went wrong for him.

- The Russian winter was very cold and froze many of his tanks and vehicles and killed lots of soldiers.
- Russia was also very big so it was difficult to quickly take over the country.
- Russian soldiers were given orders to never give up, which meant they would be shot if they ran away, slowing the German troops down.

The Germans had been stopped by the Russians.

1. Why did Blitzkrieg tactics not work in Russia- give 3 reasons?
2. Why would Stalin's orders of "No surrender and no retreat" have been successful against Blitzkrieg tactics?
3. What would be the downside to this tactic?

