

### Winston Churchill and the Second World War

After *George V*, his son *Edward VIII* became king but he abdicated because he fell in love with an divorced American woman, *Wallis Simpson*. For this reason his brother, *George VI*, *Queen Elizabeth II's* father, ascended to the British throne.

During his reign *World War II* broke out. It was fought between the *Allies* consisting of the USA, the UK and the Soviet Union and the *Axis* that was formed by Germany, Japan and Italy. Britain declared war on Germany after Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. The British Prime Minister, *Winston Churchill*, led the nation to victory.

He was very good at speaking to the British people during the war. From a bunker under 10 Downing Street Churchill encouraged people to resist, just like St Paul's Cathedral that wasn't struck during the heavy bombing of London on 29<sup>th</sup> December 1940.

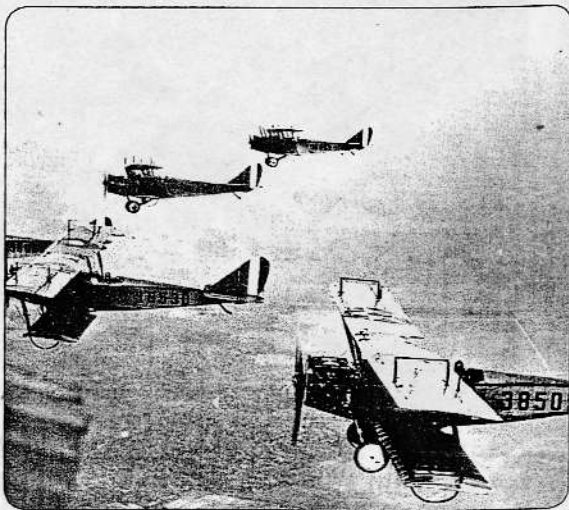
London was attacked many times during the Blitz, a German word that means "*lightning war*". This was the strategic bombing of the UK by Nazi Germany from September 1940



to May 1941. Britain resisted thanks to its *Royal Air Force* that won an air battle called the *Battle of Britain*.

The war finished in 1945 with the Allies victorious. In the war Britain lost about 300,000 soldiers and 40,000 civilians.

In 1952 *George VI* died and *Elizabeth II* became queen.



# The man with the cigar and World War II

**W**inston Churchill (1874 - 1965), the man with the cigar, was the major British political figure during the Second World War. He was born in 1874 at Blenheim Palace, to an aristocratic family. His father Randolph was an unsuccessful politician and his mother was a beautiful American and a descendant of the Duke of Marlborough (a "condottiere" of '600).



*Winston Churchill*

He entered the army and worked as a war correspondent, as a journalist and later as a politician.

In September 1939 Germany invaded Poland and Britain entered the war. In 1940 he became both Prime Minister and Minister of Defence and with determination and courage convinced the British to fight with a memorable discourse: "I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight on the hills; we shall never surrender...!" British towns were bombed by the German Air Force and in 1941 Japan attacked British colonial possessions, including Malaya, Burma, and India.

In the same year Germany attacked the Soviet Union and Japan attacked the United States (Pearl Harbour - Hawaii).

Britain, helped by its stronger allied countries, the Soviet Union and U.S.A., was able to overcome the darkest moment in British history. Germany was invaded and in 1944 France was occupied with the help of the USA.

The Allied Forces fought in Europe and in the Pacific: new atomic bombs destroyed Nagasaki and Hiroshima, two large Japanese cities (100,000 people died instantly and others died later as a consequence of the radiations). The terrible World War II ended in 1945, but a very high price had been paid: millions of Jews, soldiers and civilians had been killed. On 8th May 1945, Churchill was informed that the Wehrmacht<sup>(1)</sup> had surrendered.

#### NOTES

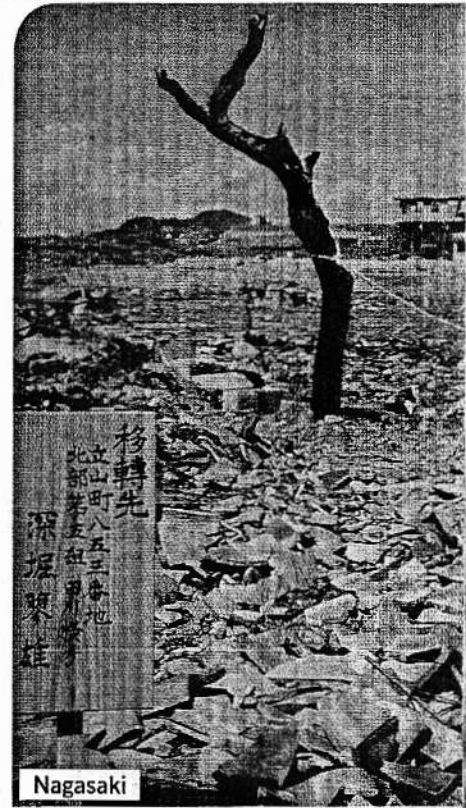
- (1) Wehrmacht = forze armate (ted.)



## The USA and World War II

When World War II [→ p. 56] broke out in Europe, Roosevelt promised to keep the USA out of the war. However, on December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941, Japan bombed the American naval base at Pearl Harbour, in Hawaii. This event forced Roosevelt to declare war. During the war, Roosevelt worked closely with the leaders of allied powers, Churchill and Stalin, but he died just before the end of the war. The new President was Harry Truman.

When the war ended in Europe, Japan refused to surrender. Truman made a big decision: on August 6<sup>th</sup> 1945, America dropped an atomic bomb named "Little Boy" on Hiroshima in Japan. It destroyed the city and killed thousands of people. Japan still refused to surrender. Three days later, on August 9<sup>th</sup> 1945, a second bomb, nicknamed "Fat Man", was dropped on Nagasaki. Again the devastation was horrible. Six days later Japan surrendered to American forces.



### CURIOSITY



The "**D Day**" is an important date in the story of the World War II. It represents the Allied invasion of Normandy on 6 June 1944: British, Canadian and USA forces invaded German-occupied Normandy and moved across Europe.