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When Britain declared war on Germany, in 1939, the government announced a civilian evacuation, particularly for children, to make sure they were in areas not likely to be bombed by Germany. In this image, released by the Imperial War Museum, we see children, from London's East End, carrying their evacuation belongings (including gas masks) as they begin their journey away from the city.

America joined the war in Europe more than two years after it began in Poland (on September 1st, 1939). When Hitler refused to back down from his Polish invasion (six months after he took control of Czechoslovakia), Britain was dragged into the conflict.

On September 3, Neville Chamberlain (then the British prime minister who, one year before, thought he'd negotiated a "peace for our time"), announced that a state of war existed between Britain and Germany. France made a similar pronouncement.

Later that day, Britain's King George VI (with preparatory help from his speech therapist, Lionel Logue) delivered a moving speech "to my people at home and my peoples across the seas." Urging everyone to "stand calm, firm, and united in this time of trial," the King warned of "dark days ahead." He also stated his belief that "we shall prevail."

Within the week, British school children were evacuated to the countryside in anticipation of bombing attacks on the nation's towns and cities. Despite Britain's hope that the United States would formally step in to help, America did not declare war on Germany until after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941.

During the war in Europe, three Allied leaders - Winston Churchill, Franklin Roosevelt and Joseph Stalin - periodically met, in person, to discuss defeating the Nazis. Although the men were from different countries, and had different political philosophies, they developed a working relationship and were united in their belief that Hitler's regime could be defeated.

The last Allied meeting - before Potsdam - was in the Crimean town of Yalta during February of 1945. On the agenda were potential occupation zones for post-war Germany and end-of-hostilities control over Eastern-European governments.

Anyone who saw FDR at Yalta would have observed a man worn down by war and twelve years as president. Briefing the American congress, after his return to the States, Roosevelt was obviously tired and weak as he discussed the Yalta Agreements.

Not only did he remain seated during his presentation - highly unusual for him - he also acknowledged - for the first time - that he wore braces on his legs. Polio had long-since paralyzed him, from the waist down, but he never allowed his physical condition to interfere with public duties.

Recognizing he needed a rest, FDR told Harry Truman - his new vice president - that he planned to spend a few weeks at his retreat in Warm Springs, Georgia. On the 12th of April, just before a one o'clock lunch at "The Little White House," FDR suddenly developed "a terrific headache." With a skyrocketing blood pressure of 300/190, the unconscious president would die within two-and-a-half hours.

How the man from Missouri learned about his changed position is legendary. In his Truman biography, David McCullough tells us what happened when Harry was summoned to the White House:

He went out the door [of his meeting room] alone . . . Then he began to run . . . to his office - to get his hat . . . At the White House . . . two ushers were waiting at the door. They took his hat and escorted him to . . . the second floor . . . Mrs. Roosevelt was waiting.

Because he never publicly shared his thoughts of the moment, we are left to wonder if he suspected what the news would be:

Mrs. Roosevelt stepped forward and gently put her arm on Truman's shoulder.

"Harry, the President is dead."

Truman was unable to speak.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" he said at last.

"Is there anything we can do for you," she said. "For you are the one in trouble now." (McCullough, pages 424-5.)

FDR was not the only missing leader at the Potsdam Conference.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/A-CHANGE-IN-LEADERS-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII>

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See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/A-CHANGE-IN-LEADERS-Victory-in-Europe-End-of-WWII>

Questions 2 Ponder

How Were British Children Impacted by Wartime Evacuation?

This poster, [maintained by Britain's Imperial War Museum](#), depicts instructions for parents on evacuating their children from the London area to other parts of the country at about the time of the German Blitz.

When Britain's evacuated children left their homes, at the beginning of World War II, neither they nor their families knew how long they would be separated.

Do you think the children's fears about the war—and the impact it would have on their friends and loved ones—were lessened or worsened by the evacuation? Explain your answer.

Why Was Harry Truman "The One in Trouble Now" after FDR Died?

What did Mrs. Roosevelt mean when she told the soon-to-be-sworn-in Harry Truman that he was "the one in trouble now?"

Media Stream



Lionel Logue - The King's Speech Therapist

Lionel Logue, in 1937, photograph by Bassano. Image X85183 from UK National Portrait Gallery.

Quoted passage from *Song of Hiawatha*, by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Lionel-Logue-The-King-s-Speech-Therapist>



Map Depicting the Crimea

Image online, courtesy the moldova.org website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-the-Crimea>



Town of Yalta

Image online, courtesy the explore-ukraine.org website.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Town-of-Yalta>



Allies Meeting in Yalta

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Allies-Meeting-in-Yalta>



FDR at Yalta

Image online, courtesy U.S. National Archives.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/FDR-at-Yalta>



FDR was Worn Down by the War

Image online, courtesy the U.S. National Archives.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/FDR-was-Worn-Down-by-the-War>



Map Depicting Warm Springs, Georgia

Image online, courtesy the [epodunk.com](http://www.epodunk.com) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Map-Depicting-Warm-Springs-Georgia0>



FDR's Little White House at Warm Springs

Image online, courtesy the [gastateparks.org](http://www.gastateparks.org) website.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/FDR-s-Little-White-House-at-Warm-Springs>



A CHANGE IN LEADERS

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George VI - King's Speech, September 3, 1939

Audio of the King's Speech, online courtesy U.K. National Archives.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/George-VI-King-s-Speech-September-3-1939>



Warm Springs - FDR Dies at the Little White House

Newsreel of historical footage, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

Move the video forward to 00:30 to begin the relevant segment.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Warm-Springs-FDR-Dies-at-the-Little-White-House>



Truman Sworn in as U.S. President

Newsreel of historical footage, maintained by the U.S. National Archives.

Move the video forward to 00:30 to begin the relevant segment.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Truman-Sworn-in-as-U.S.-President>