The Race for Northern Europe:

Thesis:
*Outbreak of WWII (Sept. 1 1939) and Soviet invasion of Finland (Nov. 1939) unleashed a RACE FOR NORTHERN EUROPE by great powers!*

Interests in region:
- Iron ore in Northern Sweden, exported to Germany, = raw material most vital to Nazi armaments industry:
  - Via port of Narvik and Norway’s coast
  - By train thru Sweden and shipped thru Baltic

- Strategic importance of Norwegian coast to British security/German interest in naval bases on coast.

- Germany calculated that the continued neutrality of North (ie free-trade) would best serve German interests, interest in maintaining “status quo.”

Developments in Fall 1939/winter 1940:
- Soviet Union aimed at “re-absorping” Finland and three Baltic states (liberated 20 years earlier). USSR felt the threatened by Hilter's aggression.
Soviet invasion sparked discussions by Western Allies about aid to Finland and possible occupation of iron-ore fields in Northern Sweden and Narvik. Attempted to form policy of greater Allied influence in Scandinavia.

Allied fear of Soviet conquest of Norwegian coast.

Vidkun Quisling (leader of Norwegian NS) visited Hitler’s Berlin in December 1939, with “invitation” to nazify Norway.

By winter 1939/40, both Western Allies (“Allied Invention Plan”) and Nazi Germany were preparing to extend the War into Northern Europe.

The Tide Turns:

Resolution of the “iron ore question” called for Swedish cooperation. (Motivation for assistance to Finland was attempt to persuade Sweden to accept occupation of Orefields by Allied troops).

Sweden maintains neutrality – does not join Finnish cause (Winter War) despite Allied pressure (Sweden feared Soviet & German counter-measures).
• Sweden declared it would not permit passage of belligerent troops through Sweden to Finland.

• **Ending of Winter War**, Finland signed peace with Moscow 12 March 1940, accepting substantial territorial losses and 400,000 Karelian refugees.

• Preconditions for Western intervention in North had changed. Allies reduced military preparations for invention, while Germany continued deliberate preparations (spurred in February by “Altmark” incident, German vessel in Norwegian waters)

• March 1, Hitler order execution of Operation West.

**Occupation of Denmark and Norway, April 9, 1940:**

• No political or military preparedness by Denmark and Norway.

• British had laid minefield off of Narvik.