The closest analogy

On Tuesday, we discussed the latest United Nations global warming report, which conceded that the world’s nations were highly unlikely to reduce emissions sufficiently to avoid disastrous climate change.

Of course, a significant portion of the American population, including our titular leader, Donald Trump, continues to claim climate change is a hoax.

The easiest and most common way to deal with unpleasant truths is to deny them.

This is the same self-deception that free Europe practiced in the 1930s when Hitler rose to power, rearmed Germany, and demonstrated time and again his desire to dominate Europe and beyond.

Instead of confronting Hitler when his war machine was weak, as Germany violated the treaty of Versailles by rearming, occupying the Rhineland, and annexing Austria, the English and French instead abandoned Czechoslovakia in hopes his desire for conquest would be satiated.

It was only when Hitler invaded Poland that France and England woke up to reality.

People living in Europe in the late 1930s, whatever their hopes and dreams might have been, were ruthlessly upended by six years of the most brutal war the world has ever seen.

Millions of soldiers died in combat and millions more civilians were killed in concentration camps and in the bombing and invasion of cities.

Much of Europe was destroyed by war’s end in 1945.

Humanity, eventually, recovered.

It’s not clear how civilization as we know it can recover from climate change. Even if we magically stopped greenhouse gas emissions tomorrow, so much warmth has already been baked into the system that sea level rise, species extinction, and weather extremes are inevitable.

It’s distressing to envision the future, but in the meantime we can reflect and act upon words attributed to John Wesley:

Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.