

Section  
I

## THE ROOTS AND CAUSES OF WORLD WAR II



By November 9, 1918, strikes among workers and soldiers in Germany forced Kaiser Wilhelm II, the crown ruler of Imperial Germany, to abdicate and flee the country.

At 11 AM on November 11, 1918, an eerie silence settled over the great battlefields of the **Western Front**, an area of Western Europe stretching from the English Channel in the north and running through Belgium and northern France to the Swiss border in the south. For the previous four years, two great armies had fought each other to a bloody stalemate in a war that pitted the

**Central Powers**, made up of Imperial Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the Ottoman Empire, and Bulgaria, against the combined forces of the **Entente**, or **Allied Powers** as they were commonly known, made up of the British Empire, France, the Russian Empire (until 1917), Italy, Japan, Serbia, Belgium, and other smaller powers. In April 1917, the United States had formally entered the war on the side of the Allied powers as an associated power. The arrival of fresh American troops was the necessary tipping point that helped bring the war to an end as both sides were exhausted and close to the breaking point by the spring of 1917.<sup>1</sup>

After a final attempt to win the war in the spring of 1918 fell short, German leaders found themselves facing a no-win situation. In September 1918, German military leaders, fearing revolution at home as well as the possibility of an Allied invasion of Germany itself, sought an immediate end to the war. This rapid turn of events, along with growing food shortages and mounting deaths on the battlefield, led many German civilians to more loudly oppose the war and even to demand the end of the imperial government of **Kaiser Wilhelm II**, the crown ruler of Imperial Germany. By November 9, 1918, strikes among workers and soldiers in Germany forced Wilhelm to abdicate and flee the country for good. In the wake of his departure, a new republic was established, mainly by moderate socialist parties. The new government agreed to an **armistice**, a temporary end to the fighting, in order to prepare for a more formal ending to the war.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that to the German people Germany seemed to have gone from winning the war to losing the war overnight is an important fact—one that helps explain why in only twenty years the world would find itself once again engulfed by war. Many conservatives in Germany—especially within the German army—felt that the war had not been lost on the battlefield. In their eyes, Germany had been “stabbed in the back” by socialists, liberals, and radicals on the homefront who had sold out their country in order to establish the republican Weimar government at the end of the war. This **stab-in-the-**



Nazis and local residents watch as Jews are forced to clean pro-independence slogans from the pavement in Vienna following the Anschluss.

cure Japan's hegemony. In the same period, Japan began establishing common ground with the Axis powers of Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. Japan became formally linked to Germany (and later to Italy) when it signed the anti-Communist treaty known as the Anti-Comintern Pact in November 1936.

## CRISES OF 1938-39

The pressures caused by the emergence of these new, highly aggressive governments in Italy, Germany, and Japan, along with the continued economic problems caused by the Great Depression, came to a head in 1938, most especially in Europe.

### **Anschluss with Austria**

The first crisis arose out of Hitler's desire to bring his own native country of Austria under German control in order to further strengthen the racial composition of his Aryan state. Any union, or **Anschluss**, between Austria and Germany was strictly forbidden under the Treaty of Versailles, but Hitler had already made clear his intentions to simply ignore the treaty. In February 1938, Hitler forced the government of Austria to appoint a number of pro-Nazi officials to important government positions. Austrian government resistance to this move led Hitler to engineer widespread Austrian Nazi protests and to threaten military action. After Chancellor Schuschnigg was forced to resign in the wake of a German invasion in March 1938, the pro-Nazi **Arthur Seys-Inquart** was briefly named as the head of Austria's government in order to facilitate the impending Nazi takeover of his country. Meeting virtually no resistance from the Austrians, German troops entered Austria the following day, thus bringing about the country's complete absorption into the German state. The British and the French were caught off-guard by the swiftness of the move and could only have changed the outcome by declaring war, a move neither was willing to make at the time.<sup>20</sup>



From left to right: Chamberlain, Daladier, Hitler, Mussolini, and Ciano (Italian Foreign Minister) pictured before signing the Munich Agreement, which gave the Sudetenland to Germany.

### **The Munich Crisis**

Hitler next turned his attention to Germany's south-eastern border and the country of **Czechoslovakia**. The Treaty of Versailles had created Czechoslovakia out of parts of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Hitler hoped to create a conflict with the Czechs over the border region of the **Sudetenland**, which was inhabited primarily by ethnic Germans. This crisis would then allow him to fulfill his goal of uniting all German peoples under Nazi rule. Hitler claimed that the Sudeten Germans were being purposefully discriminated against by the Czech government and demanded that the territory be added to Germany or the two countries would go to war. The Czech government refused to hand over sovereign territory because it represented the best line of defense against a possible German invasion. The situation reached its peak in late September of 1938, when the British Prime Minister **Neville Chamberlain** and the French Prime Minister **Edouard Daladier** traveled to meet Hitler in the German city of Munich at what became known as the **Munich Conference**.

Hitler's hopes for war never materialized as Chamberlain and Daladier, but primarily Chamberlain, successfully negotiated the turning over of those border regions of Czechoslovakia adjacent to Germany. This moment has become one of the most scrutinized episodes of the lead up to World War II, as the leaders of the Western powers were criticized for pursuing the policy of **Appeasement** in order to avoid open hostilities with Hitler. In the aftermath of the deal struck at Munich, many in Britain and France breathed a sigh of relief that war had been averted. Hitler for his part came away infuriated that he had not gotten his war, and after Munich he began to move more aggressively to meet his goals. Chamberlain came away from his meeting with Hitler convinced that Great Britain would have to speed up its

given to newly created states such as Poland and Czechoslovakia; imposed military limitations on Germany; placed heavy reparations payments on Germany; and created the League of Nations. Article 231 laid the full blame for starting World War I on Germany's shoulders.

- ✘ Germans of all political views, but especially conservatives and former military, looked at the treaty as an overly harsh document that was forced on Germany, and it undermined support for the Weimar Republic among those on the political right.
- ✘ From the beginning, the Treaty of Versailles had major shortcomings, including the exclusion of Germany and Russia, the placing of large numbers of ethnic Germans under Polish and Czechoslovak governance, the sizeable debt with which Germany was saddled, and the inability of the League of Nations to enforce its decisions.
- ✘ The Treaty of Versailles also played a key role in the rise of Fascist governments in Italy and Germany and furthered the economic pressures of the Great Depression, which affected the Soviet Union and Japan.
- ✘ Fascism was characterized by an extreme sense of nationalism, a commitment to aggressive expansion,

a rejection of democracy, and a willingness to push out those who did not fit into the idea of the new Fascist state.

- ✘ Germany under Adolf Hitler emerged as the greatest threat to the stability of the world order in the 1930s due to Hitler's pursuit of "living space" for the German people and the creation of an ethnically pure Germany.
- ✘ These ideas led Europe to the brink of war as Germany absorbed first Austria in 1938 and then Czechoslovakia in 1939. These actions would finally convince the governments of Britain and France that they needed to prepare for war.
- ✘ In order to achieve his initial goal of destroying Poland, Hitler struck a secret deal with the Soviet Union to prevent Germany from having to fight on two fronts and to create a false sense of security in the mind of Joseph Stalin.
- ✘ British and French support of the Polish government contributed to its unwillingness to give in to German demands, which presented Hitler with the opportunity to launch his war of conquest on September 1, 1939, the beginning of World War II in Europe.





German troops march past the Arc de Triomphe in June 1940.

For the remainder of the war, a sizable number of German forces had to be stationed in Norway that could have been better used elsewhere—the invasion cost the German Navy virtually its whole fleet of surface ships, and the submarine bases in Norway proved to be less useful than originally thought. Another important outcome of the Norwegian campaign was that it led, in part, to a change in power in the British government. Neville Chamberlain was forced to resign on May 10 over the perceived mishandling of the war up to that point. In his place **Winston Churchill**, who would become a central figure in the Allied war effort to defeat Nazi Germany, was selected as the new prime minister.<sup>29</sup>

## The Attack on France

The assault on France, codenamed **Case Yellow**, began on May 10, 1940, and involved not only the primary assault on France itself, but also German forays against Belgium and the Netherlands in order to secure the flanks of the main German assault. Dutch resistance, which never had a chance of slowing the progress of the Germans, lasted only until May 13, when the Dutch government fled to Great Britain. Belgian forces suffered a similar fate, though an important part of the story was the unwillingness of the Belgian military to coordinate fully with the French and British because of Belgian

fears that the Allied armies would not seek to defend the whole of Belgium and would use the Belgian Army only as a shield to buy time to get into position, points that proved to be true.<sup>30</sup> Both the French and the British military believed that the main German assault against France would come through Belgium, just as it had at the beginning of World War I.

One of the reasons that neither power, but in particular the French, considered that the main German thrust would come anywhere else was the series of fortifications that the French had erected on their border with Germany. The **Maginot Line** was thought to be an impenetrable line of forts that would halt any German advance in its tracks. However, the problem was that the forts were not designed to provide a place from which to counterattack. Thus, if enemy forces managed to bypass them, then they were rendered ineffective. Moreover, the line of forts did not extend along the whole of France's eastern border. There was a 250-mile gap along the border with Belgium, a heavily wooded region known as the **Ardennes Forest**. French leaders had lacked the money needed to fully extend the fortifications along this section and also did not want to upset the Belgian government, which might have inferred that the construction of forts along the shared border meant that France was abandoning Belgium in the event of a German invasion. There was also a general feeling that the natural terrain would make the movement of any sizeable number of troops difficult at best. France was also deeply wracked by political upheaval, with its prime minister, Édouard Daladier, resigning from his position in March 1940. This would cause an ongoing crisis of political leadership during the upcoming fighting.

German military leaders were themselves somewhat divided over whether or not an attack through the Ardennes could be carried out. However, it was decided that the attack would consist of a feint into Belgium in order to lure the French and British forces further north while the main attack would come through the Ardennes. The idea was to allow German armor units to move quickly behind the main bodies of the Allied forces and cut them off. Between May 13 and May 15, French and German forces clashed along the Meuse River in the Ardennes, but the Allies continued to believe that this southern force was the diversion and not the main attacking force. By May 15, German forces under the command of **Erwin Rommel**—who would become one of the most feared and respected of the German commanders in World War II—had splintered the French defenses and began a rapid advance through the French countryside. The success of the Germans in the Ardennes caused the entire Allied defensive line to begin to falter, and German troops advancing through Belgium in the north began to make greater gains. Much of the success of the German advance owed more to panic among the French troops and their commanders than to any specific actions taken by the Germans.<sup>31</sup>



Soviet Red Army soldiers defend their position during the Battle of Kursk.

the Allied advance. British and American forces spread out across southern Italy, seizing the city of Naples on October 1 and the important airfield complex at Foggia, from which Allied bombers could reach southern Germany. Through November and December 1943, the Allies continued their slow advance north and by January found themselves faced with a daunting German defense known as the **Gustav Line**, anchored on the famous monastery at **Monte Cassino**. The fighting in Italy from this point forward would resemble World War I more than anything else, highlighted by heavy use of massed artillery and the measuring of advances in yards rather than miles, and it would be some of the hardest fighting undertaken by either side during the war.

### German Retreat in the East

The collapse of Stalingrad signaled a weakening of the German position on the Eastern Front, but it did not mean the collapse of the front. The initial situation in February 1943 was daunting, as the Soviets continued to exploit the holes in the German lines along the southern front, aiming for the complete destruction of German forces in southern Russia. In late January and through February, the Soviets launched three major offensives against the weakened German positions. While the attacks inflicted heavy damage on German forces, they failed to dislodge the Germans from their line. The primary reason for the Soviet failure lay in the fact that their attacks were not focused in the same way as they had been at Stalingrad, and often the Soviets took territory that the Germans did not consider crucial to defend. The other factor that limited the attacks' effectiveness was that it was now the Soviet military that had outdistanced its supply lines.

While the Germans were fending off these attacks, they had slowly been building their forces for a major counter-offensive against the now overextended Soviet forces. Beginning on February 20, German forces unleashed a wave of attacks that encircled Soviet forces, capturing a large number of enemy troops and forcing the Soviet lines to pull back. During the first five days of

March, the Germans averaged a ten-mile advance each day. On March 21, as the spring rains turned the vast open fields into seas of mud, the Germans stopped offensive operations. This would be the last successful German offensive on the Eastern Front in World War II, but it would not be the last they attempted. The lines between the two sides mirrored almost exactly the lines from the previous year with one notable exception, a bulge in the Soviet lines around the city of **Kursk** that jutted out beyond the support of the Soviet lines.

As the summer operating season approached, German planners, hoping to capitalize on their successes of the late winter and early spring, began to plan for an attack on the Kursk salient, what became known as **Operation Citadel**, hoping that success there would slow Soviet offensives for the remainder of 1943. However, unlike the previous years, the Soviets were aware of German intentions and used the rainy season to carry out a massive fortification program of Kursk and to funnel large numbers of troops into the area in preparation for the coming German attack. The Battle of Kursk was among the largest battles fought in human history, with the Germans deploying 435,000 men in Army Group South (and between 700,000 and 900,000 troops in total), 9,960 artillery pieces, and 3,155 tanks. The Soviets brought one million soldiers, 13,013 artillery pieces, and 3,275 tanks along with reserves totaling close to 500,000 men and 1,500 tanks.<sup>53</sup>

The German assault began on July 5, with German forces attacking the northern and southern flanks of the salient concurrently. In the north, German troops made slow progress fighting through the heavily fortified Soviet line. When they did break through, they came to discover that the Soviets had prepared a second line of defense a few miles behind. In the south, the Germans fared slightly better at the outset but also quickly found themselves bogged down. On July 11, German forces appeared poised for a breakthrough after encircling a substantial number of Soviet troops and destroying them. The following day, the Soviets, utilizing their sizable reserves, launched a counter-attack that began the largest tank battle in history up until the Gulf War in 1991. More than 1,200 tanks took part in the fighting, which was a tactical draw, with the Soviets losing 400 tanks to the Germans' 320. Strategically, though, the battle was a victory for the Soviets, who managed to hold the line against a possible German breakthrough. On July 12, Hitler shut down Operation Citadel as he pulled troops from the German reserves there to meet the new threat of the Allied invasion of Italy.

Kursk was the deathblow to German capabilities in the East. By the summer of 1943, the Germans faced a Soviet juggernaut of 5.7 million soldiers and 7,800 tanks as well as thousands of artillery pieces and the tens of thousands of trucks needed to move this massive force.<sup>54</sup> The Soviets utilized these massive numbers to quickly go on the offensive again, beginning their attacks almost as soon as the German offensive at Kursk had ceased.

but would ultimately be the key factor in Germany's defeat in World War II, as the power of the German military was broken in the fight on the Eastern Front.

- ✂ 1942 was the crucial year of the war in Europe as Germany found itself on the defensive for the remainder of the war, thanks to critical victories by the Soviets at Stalingrad and the British at El Alamein.
- ✂ 1943 was also important because it was the first year American ground troops saw combat in the European theatre against Germany, first in North Africa and then in Italy and France.
- ✂ The Allied victory in the Battle of the Atlantic in 1943 is often overshadowed by the ground war, but it was essential to the eventual Allied victory over Germany.
- ✂ The Allied invasion of Italy in 1943 offered the promise of a quicker end to the war by knocking

Italy out, which the Allies succeeded in doing, and by allowing a possible invasion of southern Germany. However, the war in Italy proved to be a disastrous sideshow for the Allied war effort, and for the men who fought in Italy, it proved to be a deadly fight from beginning to end.

- ✂ The invasion of France in 1944, coupled with continued Soviet advances in the east, was the death-blow to Germany, whose forces, even with the brief rally of the Battle of the Bulge, were rapidly collapsing on all fronts by late 1944.
- ✂ The primary discussion on the postwar European settlement was carried out at Yalta by Franklin Roosevelt, Winston Churchill, and Joseph Stalin. The parties at Yalta divided Germany into zones of occupation. The issue of Poland would become the most contentious of the issues raised and would be a key factor in the coming Cold War between the Soviet Union and its former Western Allies.



traditional Japanese claims in the Far East. The second was a more promising offer. Japan offered to stop its expansion in Southeast Asia and to eventually evacuate from southern Indochina if the United States would drop its embargo and end supplies to China. The American government rejected both options and offered its own counter-proposal that called for a complete Japanese abandonment of China and Indochina as well as an end to the puppet state of Manchukuo. Not surprisingly, the Japanese government rejected this, and on December 4 the Japanese imperial government officially adopted a decision to go to war, with December 7 as the target date.

The success of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor can be partially attributed to the fumbling of the American military in both Washington and on the ground at Pearl Harbor. By late 1941, American intelligence had cracked the top Japanese diplomatic codes, a project known as **Magic**, which gave American planners knowledge of Japan's decision to implement a deadline for war. This, coupled with the sheer volume of Japanese military radio traffic, should have alerted the Americans to an upcoming assault. While this is true, it is too simple to just claim that the American military missed the mark here. What Magic and other radio intelligence gave was a broad outline of Japanese intentions, one that was painfully short on details of where and when. One must also acknowledge the careful planning and precise execution of the plan carried out by the Japanese Navy.

On the morning of Sunday, December 7, 1941, six of the Japanese Navy's eight carriers arrived undetected off of the northern coast of the island of Oahu. Two waves of torpedo bombers, dive-bombers, level bombers, and fighters would be employed in the attack. The first wave of 183 craft focused on the destruction of the American Army Air Corps airfields at Hickam, Wheeler, Bellows, and Mokuleia fields along with the Marine Corps airfields Ewa and Kaneohe Bay. A final target in the first wave was the Naval Air Station at Ford Island. American craft numbered close to four hundred, of which 188 were destroyed and 159 damaged. The second wave, constituting 170 craft, was launched an hour after the first and focused on the American naval vessels at anchor, especially the eight American battleships there. This second wave found its targets obscured by smoke and encountered far greater anti-aircraft fire than the first wave had. Despite this, the Japanese managed to permanently sink two of the American battleships and significantly damage the other six. Only eight of the thirty-eight cruisers and destroyers at anchor were damaged. In total, nearly 2,400 Americans were killed in the attack, the vast majority being the sailors and Marines killed in the sinking of the battleships *Arizona* and *Oklahoma*, and almost 1,200 were wounded. The Japanese lost only twenty-nine aircraft.<sup>70</sup>

The attack had achieved its immediate goal of elimi-

nating the Pacific Fleet as a threat, but in the long run, the attack on Pearl Harbor was not the victory the Japanese had hoped for. First, many of the vessels damaged were repaired and would see significant action in the Pacific fighting. Second, the Japanese failed to damage the crucial repair facilities and fuel dumps at Pearl Harbor. Third, the three American aircraft carriers in the Pacific were all at sea during the attack. This ensured that the American Navy would maintain its ability to strike back against the Japanese in the Pacific. Fourth, and perhaps most importantly, the attack on Pearl Harbor was the deathblow to an already weakened isolationist movement. The Japanese assault on Pearl Harbor galvanized the American public into widespread support for American entry into war.

## Offensive in the Far East

Within hours of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Japanese forces throughout Southeast Asia and the Central Pacific launched attacks on American and British possessions. These attacks aimed to provide the Japanese with a defensible line and were made in preparation for the attack on the Dutch East Indies and its vast oil reserves. Most of the smaller possessions of the Allied powers fell quickly to the Japanese. **Guam**, part of the Mariana Island chain, was attacked on December 8 and fell after only two days of fighting. **Hong Kong**, the main British possession in China, held out longer, resisting Japanese advances until December 25, after which Japanese forces, enraged by the British resistance, went on a murderous rampage through the British and Chinese populations of the colony.

In other spots, however, Allied forces put up a tougher fight, which forced the Japanese to respond accordingly. On **Wake Island**, two thousand miles west of Hawaii, American Marines and civilians defeated the initial Japanese effort to seize the island on December 8, when coastal artillery sank or damaged six Japanese ships. Two weeks later, the Japanese returned in greater force and seized the island at the cost of a thousand casualties.<sup>71</sup> Japanese forces also moved quickly to occupy neutral **Thailand** in order to gain a foothold for the larger operations against British-held **Burma** and **Malaya**. Elements of the Japanese Twenty-Fifth Army made several landings along the Thai coast and also struck overland from their bases in Indochina beginning on December 8. Within a week, the Thai government had signed an armistice with the Japanese that would allow Japanese forces passage through Thailand as well as a secret protocol for a Thai declaration of war against the Western powers. The main Japanese invasion of Burma would not begin until the following month, January 1942, but the seizure of Thailand put Japan in a favorable position.

The main Japanese efforts in December 1941 were aimed at British Malaya and the major naval base at Singapore and at the American presence in the Philippines. **General Tomoyuki Yamashita**, who faced a numerical-





Young survivors of Auschwitz, photographed after the camp was liberated by the Soviet Red Army.

throughout the ghetto, and the ŻZW, which centralized its resistance, fought back against the German troops with the small caches of weapons that had been smuggled in.

The resistance put up by the Jews forced the Germans to halt their advance and to turn to another tactic in order to root out the Jews in the ghetto. German troops began to systematically burn down buildings, slowly turning the ghetto into a giant firetrap. Even then, it would take close to a month for the Germans to officially put an end to the armed resistance from the Jews. More than 56,000 were taken prisoner. Of these, the Germans immediately executed 7,000, and the remainder were dispatched to the camps for extermination. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was one of the first large-scale armed resistance movements in an occupied European city and would provide an important model for other Jew-



Emaciated survivors of the Buchenwald concentration camp soon after the liberation of the camp.



An inmate of the Bergen-Belsen camp, after liberation.

ish uprisings in the camps and elsewhere. The problem was, however, that none of these uprisings matched the size of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising or had the material that had been available to the Jewish fighters in Warsaw, which doomed many of them to failure from the start.

## THE LIBERATION OF THE CAMPS

The only thing that could bring an end to the Holocaust was ending the war itself and having Allied forces capture and liberate the camps. Beginning in the summer of 1944, advancing Soviet forces in Poland approached the extermination camp at Majdanek. The speed of the Soviet advance caught German officials by surprise, and there was a hasty attempt to cover up the horrors of the camp by demolishing it. However, the Soviet advance forced the Germans to flee before the gas chambers had been destroyed, a significant piece of evidence of the true intent of the camps in Poland. Later that summer, Sobibor, Treblinka, and Belzec were also overrun by Soviet forces, but these camps had largely been put out of action by the summer of 1944 after having achieved the murder of most of Poland's Jewish population.

In January 1945, Soviet forces entered into Auschwitz to discover scores of unburied bodies and a few thousand remaining prisoners. Those who were physically able had been force-marched into Germany in the preceding weeks by German forces, during which time thousands more would die because of exposure to the elements or simply by being executed by the accompanying guards. Auschwitz provided grim evidence of the enormity of the German crimes in the form of mountains of clothes, shoes, and human hair housed in warehouses that the retreating Germans had failed to destroy.

In the West, the true extent of the Holocaust was not discovered until the spring of 1945, as Allied forces entered into the heart of Germany. Many of the camps that



The defendants at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East Ichigaya Court.



The judges at the International Military Tribunal for the Far East Ichigaya Court.

The trials of Japanese officials were driven by a deep thirst for revenge on the part of the Allied Powers to punish Japan for the atrocities carried out by its military forces in Asia and the Pacific. One of the major differences that would exist between Tokyo and Nuremberg from the beginning was that the central charges at Tokyo focused on a broad interpretation of crimes against peace while Nuremberg focused on the idea of crimes against humanity.<sup>94</sup>

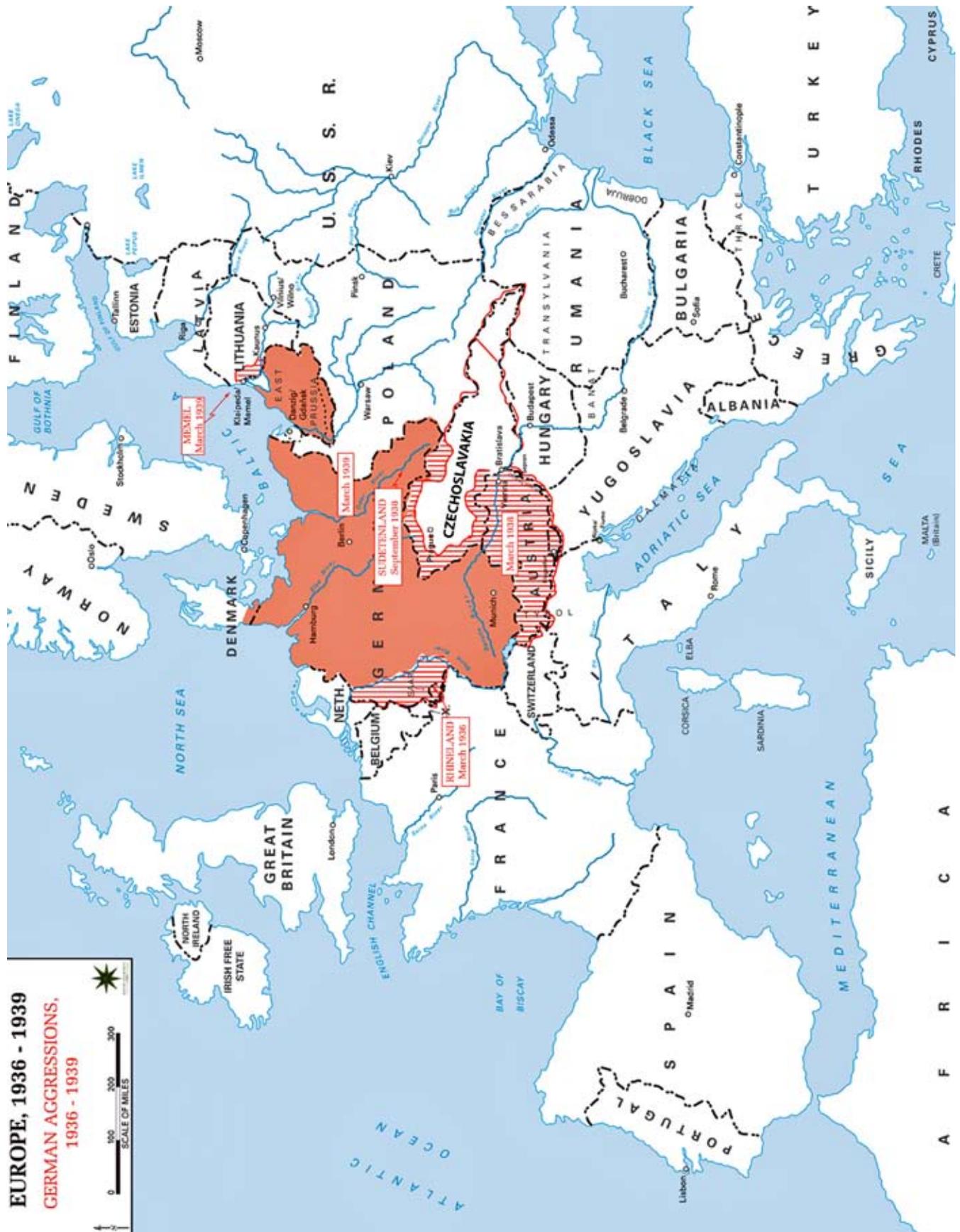
Many of the tribunals carried out by the Allied Powers were brought into existence in various Asian localities, nearly fifty all told. The majority of work done by these tribunals focused on local Japanese officials and military leaders and operated under national government leadership in these locales. They focused on what were identified as Class B and Class C war crimes. Class B represented the more conventional idea of crimes against humanity while Class C covered the planning, ordering, authorizing, and failure to prevent such actions.<sup>95</sup> Among the most notable of these trials were the trials of Tomoyuki Yamashita and Massahru Homma, two of Japan's leading generals during the war. Yamashita was tried under American authority in the Philippines, and his trial in particular attracted attention as an example of victor's justice. Yamashita was mainly charged with failing to prevent the troops under his command from carrying out atrocities against the Filipino population. Yamashita's defense argued that in the chaos of the liberation of the Philippines, Japanese communications had broken down, and so Yamashita had little chance, if any, of moderating the behavior of the men under his leadership. He was found guilty and sentenced to death in what many criticized as a hastily put together trial.

The central focus of the IMTFF, though, was the **Tokyo War Crimes Trial**, which began on May 3, 1946, and would continue for the next thirty-one months. This was the trial of the top leaders of the Japanese government and military. Eleven justices, representing the

major powers that had fought against Japan in Asia and the Pacific, were faced with a monumental task of sifting through a veritable mountain of evidence. Over the course of the trial, 419 witnesses were heard from, and the court accepted another 779 affidavits. All told, the final transcript of the trials constituted 48,288 pages of material.<sup>96</sup> The focus of the trial was on Class A war crimes, crimes against peace, which would be focused on by the prosecution until January 27, 1947.

The defense began that same day and would run for the next 255 days in an effort to disprove the prosecution's case. This was made more difficult by the fact that the tribunal applied more stringent standards to the evidence introduced by the defense than that introduced by the prosecution. Several critics of the court, most notably Radhabinod Pal, the representative from India, pointed this out. After the defense had made its case, the tribunal retired for the next six months while deliberating the verdict. When the court reconvened in late 1948, the bench was deeply divided, with seven of the eleven justices favoring that the accused be found guilty. Five separate opinions by judges were entered but not read. Seven of the accused were sentenced to death, sixteen to life imprisonment, one to twenty years, and one to seven years. None would serve their full terms, as five would die in prison, and the remainder would be released and granted clemency between 1954 and 1958.

Like the Nuremberg Trials, the Tokyo Trials were criticized as an example of victor's justice. The United States, which had played a central role in organizing and funding the Tokyo Trials as well as participating as both a judge and prosecuting body could not be expected to have maintained true impartiality. One of the main criticisms put forth by some was the fact that Emperor Hirohito was not among those tried at Tokyo. MacArthur had decided prior to the tribunal that a blanket exoneration be extended to the royal family. The decision was one primarily driven by politics, rather than by a question of justice. In many ways, the prosecution, through



German expansion, 1936–1939.

