

INTRODUCTION

In war, it is axiomatic that the victors of the last war fight the new one with the tactics of the old. Having won, the victor is content with what won for him; but the vanquished wants to know why he lost.

HISTORIAN ROBERT LECKIE

The Second World War begins with the conclusion of the First. On June 28, 1919, Germany is forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles, which officially ends what would come to be known as the First World War. The terms of the treaty are dictated primarily by the two dominant allies, France and England, who seek to punish Germany economically and geographically. The Allies believe that their hard line will prevent a weakened Germany from ever again threatening the peace. What the Allies do not predict is that by nearly destroying the German economy, the treaty insures just the opposite. Within a few years, loud voices of German nationalism rise up, men who would inspire their people by appealing to fear and revenge. The most effective is Adolf Hitler. In the early 1920s Hitler is considered a fringe-element radical by the German politicians in power, but his message appeals to German citizens suffering under a massive economic depression. Hitler's following builds throughout the 1920s, and his political opponents lack his skill at oratory and his lack of conscience for brutalizing his enemies. Hitler's political organization becomes a deadly tool for his ambitions, and anyone opposing him is subject to a level of violence that shocks and intimidates voices of reason.

Hitler's Nazi Party secures sufficient public support so that in January 1933 the aging German president, Paul von Hindenburg, has no choice but to appoint Hitler as chancellor, hoping that Hitler will create a coalition government. Instead, Hitler dissolves the Reichstag, Germany's governing body, and in March 1933 declares himself dictator. By now, no one is strong enough to oppose him.

Throughout the 1930s, Hitler stages a saber-rattling campaign that alarms his European neighbors. One aspect of the Treaty of Versailles that Hitler uses to great advantage is a clause that strips away German territory, ceding it to neighboring countries, including Poland, Czechoslovakia, and France. But those territories are still primarily occupied by ethnic Germans, who welcome Hitler's calls that they should once again become part of Germany. In March 1936, German troops occupy the demilitarized zone along France's border, former German territory known as the Rhineland. Though Germany's military leaders are apprehensive, the French do virtually nothing in protest. Hitler learns his first lesson about the Allies' unwillingness to enter into an armed confrontation. It is a lesson he will take to heart.

In 1938, Hitler annexes Austria, which falls willingly into his grasp. His next goal, which he announces with great fanfare, is to "rescue" ethnic Germans who inhabit a slice of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. Finally, European governments protest. British prime minister Neville Chamberlain goes to Munich to meet with Hitler and returns home triumphantly waving the documents Hitler has signed, documents that promise that if the Allies simply allow the Sudetenland to fall into German hands, Hitler will make no further territorial demands. Europe breathes a collective sigh of relief, despite the fact that the Czech government has no say in the matter, and no recourse. To other European leaders, it is simply the price of peace.

On August 23, 1939, Hitler signs a nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, which allows him to act without fear of Russian reprisal. His next move comes on September 1, 1939. German troops, aircraft, and tanks surge across the Polish border, sweeping away the grossly inferior Polish army. In little more than three weeks, Poland is crushed. (Barely noticed is that Russian troops have made an invasion of their own and occupy roughly half of Poland as well—one key term of the nonaggression agreement Hitler had made with Joseph Stalin.)

Western Europe reacts with outrage, and by September 3, 1939, both

Britain and France declare war on Germany. But it is a diplomatic gesture that carries no real weight. Though France possesses what is thought to be the most powerful military in Europe, the French seem unwilling to actually commit arms to a struggle against Germany. Memories of the Great War are still too vivid. Much of the land along the French-German border is still a wasteland.

While Hitler cements his hold over the German government, the German military is rarely involved in Hitler's frequent public demonstrations of patriotic fervor. The Treaty of Versailles is specific that Germany is to maintain a minimal army and navy, but among the veterans of the Great War, officers begin to emerge who understand that the backbone of Germany's proud military heritage is still intact. Far below the radar of official Europe, the German army retrains and reequips itself. Though German officers are taught that they did not truly lose the Great War, they are aware that mistakes were made. The tactics must be different in the future. As Hitler shouts into microphones all over Germany, the army discreetly goes about its business. Distrustful of the West, Stalin allows German tank and aircraft units to undergo training deep inside Russian territory, far from the eyes of Western diplomats.

Technology becomes as important as manpower, and enormous energy goes into the design of modern tanks, aircraft, and submarines. When Hitler single-handedly abolishes the Treaty of Versailles, the German army, the Wehrmacht, and the air force, the Luftwaffe, are given a free hand to add to their men and machines, so that they once again become a powerful force.

During the invasion of Poland, Hitler is astonished at his army's efficiency, at their skill in crushing an enemy by what he learns is *blitzkrieg* tactics. Those tactics had first been used in the Great War, German commanders ordering shock troops forward in a hard strike with lightning speed, launched along a narrow front. In 1918, the tactic could not be sustained by the meager technology that supported it. In 1939, Hitler sees for himself that all that has changed.

For several months after the invasion of Poland, both Germany and its professed enemies seem to take a breath, shocked perhaps by the real-

ity that what Hitler has begun might again erupt into another human catastrophe of a kind that no one believed could ever happen again. Though the British deploy their Expeditionary Force in Belgium and northern France from September 1939 until May 1940, there is no fighting in that region at all.

The French work feverishly to complete their Maginot Line, which they believe is an impregnable defensive wall along their German border. Diplomatic efforts continue, ministers from all sides beginning to believe that Hitler's aggressiveness can be halted. There is considerable unhappiness with Hitler within Germany as well, and the British receive discreet feelers from German officials who suggest that many German army officers would cooperate with efforts to remove Hitler altogether. Nothing results but talk.

The next six months allow the world to breathe easier, and in capitals all over Europe life returns to a kind of normal, journalists referring to the ongoing state of war as a "Phony War."

Throughout the calm, Hitler's propaganda ministry, under the master manipulator Paul Joseph Goebbels, fuels a passion for war in the German people, inflaming their fear of communists and foreigners, convincing them that all of Europe is preparing to invade their homeland. According to Goebbels, the brutality imposed on Germany in 1919 will be repeated. Though many Germans have no taste for another war, the propaganda is successful and secures widespread support for Hitler and his policies. After a long winter of anxious planning and maneuver by both sides, the Phony War ends. Hitler strikes first.

In April 1940, German troops embark on what becomes a race with the British to occupy the neutral country of Norway, strategically important to both sides due to its proximity to so many of the sea-lanes that feed northern Europe. Though the British claim that their intention to occupy Norway's ports has the blessing of the Norwegian people and their king, the Germans make no such pretext. To the dismay of the British navy, the Germans win the race, occupying Denmark along the way. The fall of Norway is the final straw for the British people and their parliament, who have heard too much of Neville Chamberlain's continuing calls for appeasement, for peaceful diplomatic solutions to Hitler's aggressiveness. Chamberlain is swept out of power, and the new British prime minister is Winston Churchill.

On May 10, 1940, Hitler's military attacks Holland and Belgium, two

countries that had astonishingly refused to go along with Britain and France in their official declarations of war against Germany. As Belgian and Dutch officials put hope in their diplomatic efforts, Hitler simply ignores their neutrality. German troops quickly overrun both countries, making effective use of paratroopers and glider aircraft for the first time. In a matter of days, the Low Countries fall. But to Hitler's military strategists, the primary enemy and most dangerous adversary remains France, still thought to have far superior forces in both men and arms. Any attack against the Maginot Line would surely produce disastrous numbers of casualties, too reminiscent of the slaughter of the Great War. To the north of the Maginot Line are the dense thickets of the Ardennes Forest, thought impassable, especially by German armor. But the Ardennes has carefully been studied by German commanders, and as German troops sweep across Holland and Belgium, an enormous force of German tanks suddenly swarms into the forest, which proves not so impassable after all. In only days, German tanks roll across the Meuse River, bypassing the Maginot Line almost entirely. The lightning strike allows the German panzers to slice a wide gap between French and British defenses. With German tanks rolling rapidly past their flanks, the British have no choice but to retreat. As the Germans continue their pressure, nearly all of the British forces, and other Allied troops, are backed up against the English Channel. Their only avenue of escape is a single French seaport called Dunkirk.

Throughout the first few days of June 1940, the British make every effort to hold off continuing assaults by German aircraft, though many of their troops are helplessly exposed on open beaches. To the dismay of German tank commanders, Hitler has ordered them not to attack the massed British troops. For reasons known only to Hitler, he is skeptical of his generals' reports of overwhelming victory and refuses to believe that his army has been so successful against forces he knows outnumber his own. In addition, Hitler is convinced by his overbearing and boisterous air commander, Hermann Göring, that the Luftwaffe alone can destroy the British on the beaches at Dunkirk before they can make good their escape. For days, Luftwaffe fighters and bombers harass the British, but cannot compel any British commander to surrender. Instead, as frustrated German troops look on, a thousand British seacraft, from warships to fishing boats, ferry desperate Allied soldiers away from the beach and transport them across the English Channel. Nearly a third of a million British, French, and Belgian troops are saved.

With most of the British gone from the fight in Western Europe, the Germans turn their attention to the French, who are braced to defend their own country, as they had done in 1914. But this time, German tactics and battlefield skills far outstrip what the French bring to the fight. On June 14, 1940, after less than three weeks of fighting, German troops march triumphantly into Paris.

Hitler now installs a puppet government in France, known as Vichy, headed by Henri Pétain, one of France's most popular and decorated heroes from the First World War. Pétain is feeble and easily manipulated and believes that by going along with Hitler's wishes, France can be spared a brutal conquest. In return for Pétain's cooperation, Hitler agrees not to invade southern France. For Hitler, this is no sacrifice at all. He has conquered Paris, something no German leader has been able to do since the Franco-Prussian War.

With Western Europe firmly under Hitler's thumb, the German strategists turn their attentions elsewhere. One key challenge to maintaining control over such an enormous military force is supply. The Germans begin to look beyond Europe, where vast natural resources may yet be exploited. To the dismay of many professional soldiers in Hitler's command, Hitler has cultivated a friendship with the bombastic Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, which is formalized into an alliance in September 1938. Mussolini also signs the Anti-Comintern Pact, an agreement first drawn up in 1936 between Japan and Germany, which pledges mutual assistance should either be attacked by Russia. The pact is a thinly disguised treaty that insures that neither Japan nor Germany will act against the other's best interests.

Mussolini's ambitions have taken him to East and North Africa, and since the mid-1930s Italian armies have attempted to subjugate lands from Tunisia to Ethiopia. But the Italian war machine does not compare to that of the Germans, and in Africa, Mussolini is dealt major setbacks by the British. Though the German strategists would much rather focus on capturing the British-held oil fields of the Middle East, Hitler agrees to supply German troops to assist Mussolini in what the Italian dictator believes is his personal destiny, to conquer Africa as part of a glorious new Roman Empire. But Hitler has his own distractions. With Western Europe secure, the German military reorganizes its commanders and begins to look forward. But Hitler stuns them all with his own plans, insisting on a devastating attack on Russia. Though the Russians are ostensibly German allies,

Hitler cannot be swayed from his dream of subduing such an enormous foe, especially with the virtually unlimited natural and human resources the Russians possess. There are two other motives for Hitler as well. For one, he feels a searing hatred for Joseph Stalin, which hardens into a personal vendetta that has no basis in sound military practice. The second motive is Hitler's loathing of the Russian people, whom he considers subhuman. It is an all-consuming philosophy that has already spread its bleak hand across Germany and the countries that have fallen under the German bootheel.

For years, part of Hitler's appeal to the German people has been in his boisterous insistence that they are unique and racially superior, that the German bloodline should prevail over all others. With so much German territory lost by the Treaty of Versailles, it is easy for Hitler to convince his nation of the need for more *Lebensraum*, or living space, allowing the pure bloodlines of Aryan Germany to flourish and prosper across Europe. To make room for his version of the Chosen People, Hitler has already begun ordering the forced relocation of sizable numbers of immigrants and Jews from their homes in Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and other countries, including France. These uprooted people are being transported into enormous camps, where they are often told they will only remain until new homes can be found for them. But few are allowed to leave, and instead, enormous numbers of men, women, and children are led into gas chambers, where they are simply exterminated.

In the first two years of the war, knowledge of the camps is confined mostly to the Gestapo, Hitler's secret police. Many close to Hitler's inner circle choose to ignore the rumors of what is happening to the Jews. Others accept Hitler's philosophy without qualm. Most of the professional soldiers, whose duties keep them far out in the field, have little or no idea what is taking place in the concentration camps.

On June 22, 1941, a force totaling more than 186 German divisions, nearly two and a half million men, crosses the frontier into Russia. Hitler's dream of conquering the enormous country will occupy most of his attention for many months to come.

As Germany's might spreads eastward, in North Africa a far smaller force has been deployed. They are mostly mobile and armored forces, many of the same men who had launched the stunningly successful attack across France and Belgium. Now, they will be asked to drive the British away from the places held dear by Mussolini, and if possible to secure all

of North Africa. Compared to the enormous army surging across the plains of Russia, the two panzer divisions that land at the Libyan port city of Tripoli are barely a token force, not nearly the juggernaut Mussolini has hoped for. But Mussolini will take what he can get. The panzers are led by the man whose name has already gained him a considerable reputation in the German high command. His name is Erwin Rommel.

In the years following the Great War, the American government is as divided as its people. As had been the case in 1914, many Americans are enormously reluctant to get involved in the rest of the world's problems. In the 1920s, isolationist sentiment returns with even more vigor.

When Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumes the presidency in 1933, the nation has suffered through three years of a Great Depression, and Roosevelt's New Deal policies are designed to put the American economy back on its feet. His policies succeed, and throughout the 1930s Americans begin to emerge from their economic gloom. American newspapers trumpet the turmoil around the globe, the civil war in Spain, Mussolini's conquests in Africa, Japan's aggressions against China. As Hitler's landgrab in Europe evolves into full-scale war, American celebrities such as Charles Lindbergh warn the nation that any alliance the United States makes with Hitler's enemies will only result in America's destruction. Roosevelt does not agree.

America's relationship with Great Britain is based on more than economic alliance, and Roosevelt believes that the American people are enormously pro-British. After Britain's near catastrophe at Dunkirk, Roosevelt responds with several aid packages, including military supplies and ships, loaned to Britain on terms that clearly demonstrate where America's allegiance lies. In March 1941, the Lend-Lease Act formalizes this alliance. Roosevelt's enemies, including Lindbergh, are outraged.

On December 7, 1941, that outrage is silenced. The Japanese launch a devastating surprise attack on the American naval fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. As Roosevelt conveys the news to a shocked American public, the isolationists and pacifists are suddenly ignored. Roosevelt declares war on Japan and its allies, Germany and Italy.

Immediately, American military leaders discover that two decades of antimilitary sentiment have reduced the American armed forces to a piti-

ful state. From aircraft to tanks, rifles to fighting men, the armed forces are woefully underequipped to confront an enemy that possesses the most modern tools of war. General John Dill, the senior British officer stationed in Washington, notes, "Their armed forces are more unready for this war than it is possible to imagine. The whole organization belongs to the days of George Washington." Thus begins a crash program involving every industrial resource the United States can muster. Within weeks, factories dedicated to appliances and modern conveniences are converted to the manufacture of munitions. Automobile makers begin producing tanks. The aid to Britain continues, but in Washington, the American military begins to divide its priorities, some believing that America should first confront Japan, others, Europe. A wrestling match for resources ensues. The difficult balance is maintained with a skilled hand by the chief of staff, George C. Marshall, who is convinced that if Britain falls, America will be isolated, squeezed hard between two great military powers. Marshall convinces Roosevelt that Hitler must be defeated first if there is to be any hope that the British can devote their own resources to helping fight the Japanese.

As American troop strength rises, and volunteers fill the training centers, the American officer corps undergoes convulsions of its own. Marshall's unenviable job is to find the right men for jobs no one has trained for. Command in the Pacific is given to the former chief of staff Douglas MacArthur, whose experience in the field has come mostly in the Philippines. Though the British are also confronting Japanese threats against their colonies in Singapore and India, there is no united front, and MacArthur takes command over a vast area in the central and western Pacific that is primarily an American affair. In Europe, Marshall's choice of commander is less clear-cut. With no Allied forces actually fighting on the European continent, America's first role must be to support an invasion, to stand beside the British, seeking the means to crack Hitler's stranglehold. The Americans strongly favor an invasion across the English Channel, directly into France. The British disagree vehemently, and Winston Churchill pushes for regaining control of the Mediterranean Sea. Churchill believes that if Germany prevails in North Africa, the threat to the Suez Canal and the oil fields of the Middle East cannot be overcome. Churchill's plan is to strike first at German and Italian interests in North Africa. Since early 1941, British forces have been engaging Erwin Rommel in a seesaw duel

across the Libyan desert. Churchill convinces the Americans that if the Germans are swept clear of North Africa, all of southern Europe, especially Italy, would become vulnerable to an Allied attack. Though Marshall and Roosevelt continue to push for a cross-Channel invasion, Churchill prevails. All that is required is a commander, one man to lead the combined forces of America and Britain. Though the British have experience against Hitler's armies, Churchill understands that American resources are essential to success. To that end, the American people must feel that their military is standing side by side with Britain, not one step behind them. Therefore, the commander of the overall campaign should be an American. Though many in the British military are quietly convinced he will be but a figurehead, George Marshall chooses the man he believes to be the most dogged and clearheaded administrator in the American command: Dwight D. Eisenhower.

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER

Born 1890, in Denison, Texas, one of seven sons (only six survive to adulthood) of hardworking, devout parents. He is originally named David Dwight, but reverses his names after he graduates high school. Eisenhower spends most of his early years in Abilene, Kansas, learns the conservative values of American life from the small-town experiences of a world cut off from the buoyant temptations of the "Gay Nineties."

He is an exceptional athlete and is sensitive about his family's humble position in the community. Handy with his fists, he quickly establishes that he will tolerate none of the high-handed snootiness of the town's more aristocratic boys.

In 1911, Eisenhower applies to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Maryland, and as an afterthought, and to increase his chances for acceptance, adds an application to West Point as well. He has no plans for a military career, believing only that the service academies will offer him a first-class college education, which otherwise his parents could simply not afford. To his disappointment, his age makes him too old for acceptance at Annapolis, but he is accepted by West Point. At twenty-one, Eisenhower is the oldest member of his class. His journey east is his first trip away from his close-knit family.

He graduates in 1915, sixty-first in his class, leaving behind a reputa-

tion for prowess on the football field far more than in the classroom. He cannot know at the time that of the 164 members of his graduating class, fifty-nine will rise to the rank of general, the most of any class produced by West Point. Included among these will be his friend Omar Bradley.

In late 1915, he is sent to San Antonio, Texas, where he meets Mamie Geneva Doud, who bears an uncanny resemblance to actress Lillian Gish, and whom Eisenhower describes as "the most beautiful woman I have ever seen." In July 1916, they are married. In September 1917, Mamie gives birth to Doud Dwight Eisenhower, but the baby's life is cut short by scarlet fever, and Eisenhower's first son dies in January 1921, at age three. It is a tragedy he will rarely speak about. In August 1922, Mamie gives birth again, to another boy, whom they name John.

Throughout the Great War, Eisenhower remains stateside, training tank crews, and he serves as commander of a tank brigade at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He meets and becomes friends with the army's tank-school commander, George Patton.

With the conclusion of the war, Eisenhower accepts a role in the downsized army, serves as General Fox Connor's chief of staff in Panama, with the rank of major, a rank he will hold for more than fifteen years. Connor had served closely with American commander John "Black Jack" Pershing and is one of the army's most outstanding minds. He educates Eisenhower in literature and the arts, broadening the young man's perspectives, and gives Eisenhower the opportunity to hone his skills at military planning and organization.

In 1924, Connor suggests that Eisenhower enter the Army's Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. After a two-year study, Eisenhower surprises himself more than anyone else by graduating first, out of a class of 275 officers.

In 1927, Eisenhower serves as aide to retired general Pershing, as part of the American Battlefield Monuments Commission. Pershing influences him, as had Fox Connor, and encourages him to read and study the tactics and strategies of the bloody fields of the Great War.

In 1933, Eisenhower accepts a staff position with then Chief of Staff Douglas MacArthur. He serves in a continuing role on MacArthur's staff in the Philippines and remains there until 1940. The two men are oil and water, but Eisenhower performs his duties with complete professionalism, though he genuinely dislikes MacArthur. However, Eisenhower respects