The Routledge History of the Second World War

Edited by Paul R. Bartrop

THE ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

The Routledge History of the Second World War sums up the latest trends in the scholarship of that conflict, covering a range of major themes and issues.

The book delivers a thematic analysis of the many ways in which study of the Second World War can take place, considering international, transnational, and global approaches, and serves as a major jumping off point for further research into the specific fields covered by each of the expert authors. It demonstrates the global and total nature of the Second World War, giving due coverage to the conflict in all major theatres and through the lens of the key combatants and neutrals, examines issues of race, gender, ideology, and society during the war, and functions as a textbook to educate students as to the trends that have taken place in how the conflict has been (and can be) interpreted in the modern world. Divided into twelve parts that cover central themes of the conflict, including theatres of war, leadership, societies, occupation, secrecy, and legacies, it enables those with no memory of war to approach it with a view to comprehending what it was all about and places the history of this conflict into a context that is international, transnational, and institutional.

This is a comprehensive and accessible reference volume for anyone interested in the most up to date scholarship on this major conflict.

Paul R. Bartrop is Professor Emeritus of History at Florida Gulf Coast University, USA, and Visiting Professorial Fellow at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, Australia. He is the author, editor, or co-editor of over 25 books relating to the Holocaust, genocide, and the Second World War.

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Paul R. Bartrop

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CONTENTS

CONTRIBUTORS

Alex Alvarez is Professor of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Northern Arizona University and is the author of *Governments, Citizens, and Genocide*; *Murder American Style*; *Violence: The Enduring Problem*; *Genocidal Crimes*; *Native America and the Question of Genocide*; and *Unstable Ground: Climate Change, Conflict, and Genocide*. He is an editor for *Genocide Studies International* and has been invited to speak and present his research across the United States and in various countries.

Rhys Ball is a lecturer at Massey University's Centre for Defence and Security Studies, based in Auckland, New Zealand. His 2009 doctoral thesis examined New Zealand Special Forces operations during the Vietnam War. He is a member of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO) and an affiliate faculty member of the University of North Georgia, Military College of Georgia. His teaching and research interests include intelligence history, strategic studies, and military history, in particular Special Forces history.

Mary Kathryn Barbier is a professor of history at Mississippi State University. She is a co-editor of War in History, co-director of the Second World War Research Group, North America (SWWRG, NA), and co-series editor of a six-volume Cultural History of War. She is the author of *Spies, Lies, and Citizenship: The Hunt for Nazi Criminals* and *D-Day Deception: Operation Fortitude and the Normandy Invasion*, as well as numerous book chapters and articles. Barbier regularly presents her research at national and international scholarly conferences.

Paul R. Bartrop is Visiting Professorial Fellow at the University of New South Wales, Canberra, and Professor Emeritus of History at Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida. His published works include *Children of the Holocaust* (2020); *Perpetrating the Holocaust: Leaders, Enablers, and Collaborators* (2019); *Heroines of Vichy France: Rescuing French Jews during the Holocaust* (2019); *Modern Genocide: Analyzing the Controversies and Issues* (2018); *The Holocaust: An Encyclopedia and Document Collection* (2017); and *Resisting the Holocaust: Upstanders, Partisans, and Survivors* (2016).

Kevin Blackburn is Associate Professor in History at the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore. He has taught in Singapore since 1993, when he left the History Department of the University of Queensland to take up his present teaching position. He has co-authored with Karl Hack *Did Singapore*

Have to Fall? (Routledge, 2004) and *War Memory and the Making of Modern Malaysia and Singapore* (NUS Press, 2012).

Graham Broad is Associate Professor of History at King's University College at Western University in Ontario, Canada. He is the author of *A Small Price to Pay: Consumer Culture on the Canadian Home Front, 1939–1945* and *One in a Thousand: The Life and Death of Captain Eddie McKay, Royal Flying Corps.*

Stephen Brown is Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Wollongong, Australia. He teaches courses that explore the Russian/Soviet experience of war and how war has shaped the Soviet state, especially during the Stalin era. His research focuses upon how the revival of Russian nationalism in the Putin era has impacted post-communist Russia's retelling of Soviet and Russian history, in particular the history of the Great Patriotic War.

Michael Bryant is Professor of History and Legal Studies at Bryant University in Smithfield, Rhode Island, and an adjunct professor of law at Creighton University Law School in Omaha, Nebraska. He is the author of four books: *Confronting the "Good Death": Nazi Euthanasia on Trial, 1945–53*; *Eyewitness to Genocide: The Operation Reinhard Death Camp Trials 1955–66*; *A World History of War Crimes: From Antiquity to the Present*; and *Nazi Crimes and Their Punishment: A Short History with Documents.*

Erik D. Carlson is Associate Professor of History at Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida, where he teaches courses on the US military and American history. His research interests are World War II in the Pacific and US aeronautics. In 2018 he published "Two Kinds of Civilians: American Encounters with Civilians on Kerama Retto and Ie Shima and the End of the Pacific War," in Nicola Foote and Nadya Williams (eds.), *Civilians and Warfare in World History* (Routledge).

Vinicius Mariano de Carvalho is Senior Lecturer for Brazilian Studies at the Department of War Studies and Director of the King's Brazil Institute at King's College London. He holds a PhD from the University of Passau, Germany. His research focus and publications are on the fields of Brazilian and Latin-American literature, music, and culture, as well as in defense, security, and strategy from the Brazilian perspective. He is also a musician and currently directs the King's Brazil Ensemble.

Adrian Ciani teaches courses in the medieval and modern history of the Roman Catholic Church at St. Augustine's Seminary in the Toronto School of Theology. He is also a professor in the School of English and Liberal Studies at Seneca College and is currently completing a book manuscript on the Vatican, American Catholics, and the State of Israel in the early Cold War.

Frances Davey is Associate Professor of History at Florida Gulf Coast University, teaching US women's history, public history, and material culture. She has published in the *Oral History Review* and the *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era.* Her research interests include childhood during the Second World War, abortion and reproductive justice, and the intersection of women's athletics and activism. She is currently

working on a manuscript titled "Women's Collegiate Athletics and the Development of Physical Activism."

Michael Dickerman is a member of the adjunct faculty at Stockton University, New Jersey, teaching a range of undergraduate courses in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. He also teaches graduate courses in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Gratz College, Pennsylvania. He is the co-editor (with Paul R. Bartrop) of *The Holocaust: An Encyclopedia and Document Collection* (4 volumes, 2017), winner of the 2018 Distinguished Book Award by the Society of Military History and the 2018 Judaica Reference Award by the Association of Jewish Libraries.

Vesna Drapac is an Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Adelaide. She works on social and cultural responses to war and its aftermath and transnational Catholic faith communities in 20th-century Europe. Her publications include *War and Religion: Catholics in the Churches of Occupied Paris*; *Constructing Yugoslavia: A Transnational History*; and, with Gareth Pritchard, *Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Empire.*

Mark Edele is Hansen Professor in History at the University of Melbourne. His publications include *Soviet Veterans of the Second World War* (2008), *Stalinist Society* (2011), *Stalin's Defectors* (2017), *Shelter from the Holocaust: Rethinking Jewish Survival in the Soviet Union* (with Atina Grossmann and Sheila Fitzpatrick, 2017), *The Soviet Union. A Short History* (2019), *Debates on Stalinism* (2020), and, with Martin Crotty and Neil Diamant, *Winners and Losers: War Veterans in the Twentieth Century* (2020). He is currently completing a history of Stalinism at war.

Brian P. Farrell is Professor of Military History at the National University of Singapore, where he has been teaching since 1993. Research interests include the military history of the British Empire and the Western military experience in Asia, as well as grand strategy and coalition warfare. Major publications include *Empire in Asia: A New Global History* (2 vols., 2018), *The Defence and Fall of Singapore* (2005 and 2015), and *The Basis and Making of British Grand Strategy 1940–1943* (1998).

Marcus Faulkner is a historian specializing in 20th-century naval and intelligence history with focus on the Second World War era. He has published articles in the field and edited several volumes on naval aspects of the war, the most recent being *Decision in the Atlantic: The Allies and the Longest Campaign of the Second World War* (2019). He is based and teaches in the Department of War Studies, King's College London.

Jonathan Fennell is Reader in Modern History at King's College London, Co-Director of the Sir Michael Howard Centre for the History of War and Co-Founder and President of an international scholarly society, the Second World War Research Group. He holds a doctorate in Modern History from the University of Oxford and is the prize-winning author of two books on the military and social history of Britain and the Commonwealth in the Second World War.

Francisco César Alves Ferraz is Associate Professor of History at Universidade Estadual de Londrina (UEL), Brazil. He earned his doctorate from Universidade de São

Paulo (2003). He was a Visiting Scholar at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville (2011–2012) and at Universidad de Buenos Aires (2019). His research and main publications focus on Brazilian participation during the Second World War, the war veterans from Brazil and the United States, and the relationship between the armed forces and society.

Shannon L. Fogg is Professor of History at Missouri University of Science & Technology. Her research focuses on the history of daily life in France during the Second World War and examines the relationship between individuals and the state during the war and the Holocaust. She is the author of two books: *The Politics of Everyday Life in Vichy France: Foreigners, Undesirables, and Strangers* and *Stealing Home: Looting, Restitution, and Reconstructing Jewish Lives in France 1942–1947.*

Joshua Fortin is Adjunct Professor of History and Integrated Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University, Fort Myers, Florida. Since 2015 he has taught courses that explore systems theory as it relates to memory and public history in the fields of public health and housing. As well as undertaking work on occupied Western Europe during the Second World War, he also engaged in advanced research on genocide during the Middle Ages as well as human rights abuses during 19th-century colonialism in Africa and the United States.

Richard B. Frank, an internationally recognized scholar on the Asia Pacific War, published *Guadalcanal* in 1990. His *Downfall: The End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* appeared in 1999 and has been called one of the six best books in English about World War II. The first volume of his trilogy on the Asia Pacific War, *Tower of Skulls*, was published in March 2020. He serves on the Board of Presidential Councilors of the US National World War II Museum.

John Gilmour is Honorary Fellow in Scandinavian Studies at the University of Edinburgh. His research interests include the Nordic countries and the Second World War, the prose literature of Harry Martinson and Björn Larsson, and cultural influences and self-image in present-day Scandinavia. His book on Sweden's experience during the Second World War, *Sweden, the Swastika and Stalin*, was published in 2010 and in Sweden as *Hitler, Stalin och Sverige* (2016). He was joint editor of *Hitler's Scandinavian Legacy* in 2013.

Lachlan Grant is Senior Historian at the Australian War Memorial, where he has been a member of the Military History Section since 2011. Previously, he worked as a lecturer at Monash University, Melbourne, where he studied history and completed a PhD in 2010 and MA in 2005. As well as publishing widely on Australians in the Second World War and the prisoner-of-war experience, he has curated several museum exhibitions and led battlefield tours.

Eleanor Hancock is Associate Professor of History at the University of New South Wales, Canberra. Her area of academic research is modern German history, especially the history of Nazi Germany, and World War II. She has published *The National Socialist Leadership and Total War, 1941–45*; *Ernst Röhm, Hitler's SA Chief of Staff*; and *Swastika*

over the Acropolis: Re-interpreting the Nazi invasion of Greece in World War II (co-authored with Craig Stockings).

Glyn Harper is Professor of War Studies at Massey University in Palmerston North. He is a former army officer and was the New Zealand Army's official historian for the deployment to East Timor. The best-selling author of more than 20 books for adults, he is also an award-winning author of 13 books for children. In 2010, he was a Fulbright Senior Scholar in the USA, and in 2012 he was awarded a Queen's Service Medal for services to historical research.

Karl James is Head of the Military History Section at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. A graduate from the University of Wollongong, his research focuses on Australia's involvement in the Second World War. He has worked on several major exhibitions at the Memorial, and his publications include *Double Diamonds: Australian Commandos in the Pacific War, 1941–45* (2016); *The Hard Slog: Australians in the Bougainville Campaign, 1944–45* (2012); and, as editor, *Kokoda: Beyond the Legend* (2016).

John W. Jeffries is Professor Emeritus of History and Dean Emeritus of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences at the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. He earned his BA from Harvard and, after five years as an officer in the US Navy, his PhD from Yale. He is an author of books and articles on the Franklin D. Roosevelt era, including *Wartime America: The World War II Home Front* and *A Third Term for FDR: The Election of 1940.*

Greg Kennedy is Professor of Strategic Foreign Policy and the Director of the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies at the Defence Studies Department, King's College London, based at the Joint Services Command and Staff College in Shrivenham, UK. He is the author of the award-winning monograph *Anglo-American Strategic Relations and the Far East, 1933–1939* (Frank Cass, 2002) and has published internationally on strategic foreign policy issues, contemporary British security and defence policy, maritime strategy and security, disarmament, military education, diplomacy, economic warfare, and intelligence.

Shira Klein is Associate Professor of History at Chapman University. Her book *Italy's Jews from Emancipation to Fascism* (Cambridge University Press) was selected as a double finalist for the 2018 National Jewish Book Award. Winner of the Barbieri Grant in Modern Italian History and the USC Shoah Foundation Fellowship, her essays have appeared in *Modern Judaism*, *Nashim*, and the *Israel Studies Review*. She is creator of the podcast *Forgetting Fascism*.

Georg Kreis studied in Basel, Paris, and Cambridge, earning his PhD at the University of Basel in 1972. He taught at the University of Basel from 1986, becoming a full professor there in 1995. Between 1993 and 2011 he was Founding Director of the Interdisciplinary Post-Graduate Institute of European Studies of the University of Basel, a Member of the Independent Expert Commission "Switzerland – Second World War" (1996–2001), and was President of the official Swiss Commission against Racism (1995–2011). His edited volume, *Switzerland and the Second World War* (2000) was republished by Routledge in 2014.

David Littlewood is Lecturer in History at Massey University, New Zealand, who primarily researches the implementation of conscription during the world wars. He has edited *Experience of a Lifetime: People, Personalities and Leaders in the First World War* and authored *Military Service Tribunals and Boards in the Great War: Determining the Fate of Britain's and New Zealand's Conscripts*. He is currently working on a book that examines New Zealanders' experiences of conscription during the Second World War.

Paweł Machcewicz is a professor at the Institute of Political Studies at the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw. He was founding director of the Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk. His research interests are the Second World War, the Cold War, and the communist regimes in Eastern Europe. His many books include *Rebellious Satellite: Poland 1956* (2009), *Poland's War on Radio Free Europe, 1950–1989* (2014), and *The War That Never Ends: The Museum of the Second World War in Gdańsk* (2019).

Shaun Mawdsley is a PhD student and tutor in the Centre for Defence and Security Studies, within the School of People, Environment and Planning at Massey University. His doctoral thesis focuses on combat effectiveness and received an Australian Army History Research Grant. He is a graduated Massey Scholar, recipient of the Australian War Memorial's Summer Scholarship, and Country Assessor for Transparency International's Defence Integrity Index. Other research includes adaptation to jungle warfare and amphibious operations, and New Zealand's security environment.

Deborah Mayersen is Lecturer in International and Political Studies at the University of New South Wales Canberra at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Her research expertise is in the field of genocide studies, including the Armenian genocide, the Rwandan genocide, and genocide prevention. Her publications include *On the Path to Genocide: Armenia and Rwanda Reexamined* (2014) and, most recently, the edited volume *A Cultural History of Genocide in the Modern World* (Bloomsbury, 2021).

David A. Messenger is Professor of History and Chair of the Department at the University of South Alabama, in Mobile, Alabama. He is the author of three books which examine the significance of justice in the politics of Spain during and after the Second World War. He also writes about the politics of memory in Spain and Europe during the 20th century. His most recent book is *War and Public Memory: Case Studies in Twentieth Century Europe* (2020).

Kristin Mulready-Stone is faculty at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where she teaches courses in the History of East and Southeast Asia and directs the teaching and learning center. She earned her PhD from Yale University in the History of Modern China. Her first book, *Mobilizing Shanghai Youth: CCP Internationalism, GMD Nationalism, and Japanese Collaboration* was published in 2015 and focuses on youth organizations from 1920 to 1942, with particular emphasis on their role during World War II.

Richard Overy is Honorary Research Professor at the University of Exeter. He has written and edited more than 30 books on the Second World War, the European dictatorships, and the history of air power. His book *The Bombing War: Europe 1939–1945*

won a Cundill Award in 2014. He is a Fellow of the British Academy and a Member of the European Academy for Sciences and Arts.

Robin Prior is Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Adelaide, where he was an Australian Research Council fellow from 1983 to 1985. In 1986 he joined the University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy, where he became Professor and Head of the School of History before becoming the inaugural Head of the School of Humanities. He has written five books on the First World War and edited the *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History* and, more recently, *When Britain Saved the West.*

Gareth Pritchard teaches modern history at the University of Adelaide in South Australia. His publications include *The Making of the GDR: From Antifascism to Stalinism* (2004), *Niemandsland: A History of Unoccupied Germany, 1944–45* (2012), and, with co-author Vesna Drapac, *Resistance and Collaboration in Hitler's Empire* (2017).

Monica Rankin is Associate Professor of History at the University of Texas at Dallas, where she is also Director of the Center for US–Latin America Initiatives. She is the author of *¡México, la patria! Propaganda and Production during World War II* (2009); *The History of Costa Rica* (2012); and *Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture: The Search for National Identity, 1820s–1900* (2010). Her general textbook on Latin American history, *Exploitation, Inequality, and Resistance: Three Centuries of Latin American History*, and *Problems in Modern Mexican History* were published in 2017.

Jennifer Rich is Executive Director of the Rowan Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights, Director of the Master's Program in Holocaust and Genocide Education, and an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Rowan University, New Jersey. She teaches undergraduate and graduate courses, including Holocaust and Genocide Education and Sociology of the Holocaust. Her recent book, *Keepers of Memory: The Holocaust and Transgenerational Identity*, examines the ways in which the Holocaust shapes the lives of children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors.

Joanna Salapska-Gelleri is Associate Professor of Cognitive Psychology at Florida Gulf Coast University, in Fort Myers, Florida. She received her PhD in Cognitive Experimental Psychology from the University of Nevada, Reno. She studies the fallibility of memories, the processes and factors that distort and enhance recall, and how language affects the consolidation of autobiographical information. Her broader research interests include the nature of the multilingual brain and the relationship between human cognition and artificially intelligent technology.

Bastian Matteo Scianna is Lecturer at the University of Potsdam, Germany. He specializes in the history of the Second World War, Fascist Italy, and the history of European integration. His recent publications include *The Italian War on the Eastern Front, 1941–1943. Operations, Myths and Memories* (2019) and "A predisposition to brutality? German practices against civilians and francs-tireurs during the Franco-Prussian war 1870–1871 and their relevance for the German 'military Sonderweg' debate," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 30:4–5, 2019, pp. 968–993.

Philip Seaton is a professor in the Institute of Japan Studies, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. He researches Japanese memories of the Asia-Pacific War and tourism induced by popular culture ("contents tourism"). He is the (co-)author/(co-)editor of six books, including *Japan's Contested War Memories* (2007), and has guest-edited special editions of *Japan Forum* (27.1, 2015) and *Journal of War & Culture Studies* (12.1, 2019).

Gary Sheffield holds the Chair of War Studies at the University of Wolverhampton. He has published widely on military history, specializing in Britain and the two world wars. He is currently working on *Civilian Armies: The Experience of British and Dominion Soldiers in the Two World Wars*, which will be published by Yale University Press.

Jordana Silverstein is a historian based in Melbourne, affiliated with the School of Historical and Philosophical Studies at the University of Melbourne and the Department of Archaeology and History at La Trobe University. She is the author of *Anxious Histories: Narrating the Holocaust in Jewish Communities at the Beginning of the Twenty First Century* (2015) and co-editor of *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and the Third Generation* (2016) and *Refugee Journeys: Histories of Resettlement, Representation and Resistance* (2020).

David Stahel is a Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales, Canberra. He is the author of five books on Germany's war in the East, including *Operation Barbarossa and Germany's Defeat in the East* (2009), *Kiev 1941* (2012), *The Battle for Moscow* (2015), and *Retreat from Moscow* (2019). He has also edited four books, including *Joining Hitler's Crusade* (2017), *Mass Violence in Nazi Occupied Europe* (2018 with Alex J. Kay), and *Soldiers of Barbarossa* (2020 with Craig Luther).

Eric A. Strahorn is an associate professor at Florida Gulf Coast University. He has been a Research Fellow of the National Asia Research Program of the National Bureau of Asian Research and Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, a Florence Tan Moeson fellow at the Library of Congress, and a Fulbright Fellow. His published works include *An Environmental History of Northern India After Independence: The Himalayan Tarai in Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal* (2009) and "The Indus River Basin in the 21st Century," in Robert M. Hathaway and Michael Wills (eds.) *Managing New Security Challenges in Asia* (2013).

David Sutton is a historian at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. He completed his PhD at the University of Wollongong in 2018. His thesis, *German Defeat/Red Victory: Change and Continuity in Western and Russian Accounts of June-December 1941*, examines Western, Soviet, and modern Russian accounts of the Nazi-Soviet War, in particular the Battle for Moscow. He taught history and politics, with a particular focus on the Second World War in Europe, at the University of Wollongong.

PREFACE

The Routledge History of the Second World War is a work which, in a single volume, is designed to sum up the latest trends in the scholarship of that conflict, covering a range of major themes and issues. Given the tens of thousands of works that have been generated over several decades on this broad topic, the question must be asked: what academic space is left for a new history of the Second World War?

This is best answered through reference to the generational shifts that necessitate ongoing reconsideration of any major historical episode. When reflecting on the leaders, ideas, movements, and events of the Second World War, the quest for understanding is crucial. As newer and ever-newer readers contemplate it, and as the last survivors of the "Greatest Generation" pass on, the distance in time demands that pathways to this understanding are created that will enable those with no memory of the war to approach it with a view to comprehending what it was all about. This, in turn, will assist in helping modern readers to make sense of the world in which they live today.

This volume therefore offers a means to approach and appreciate a variety of themes relating to the war. Moreover, it represents an attempt to place the history of that conflict into a context that is international, transnational, and institutional, moving beyond partisan treatments which all too frequently characterize Second World War scholarship. The sections into which the volume is divided are intended to assist readers in approaching the conflict's enormity. The structure takes the form of a series of general topics, in which a number of key essays, written by leading scholars, illustrate the themes encompassed by the topic heading.

Ultimately, therefore, the purpose of this book is not to offer yet another narrative history of the Second World War but, rather, to open lines of further inquiry from a solid base of definitive academic knowledge. From this foundation, scholars and teachers can then propose more detailed works confident that their students possess an essential basis from which to proceed.

This volume has six essential aims, as follows: to provide a comprehensive but readily accessible reference work for students, scholars, and the general public regarding the Second World War, in accordance with a broad range of themes; to deliver a thematic analysis of the many ways in which study of the Second World War can take place, considering international, transnational, and global approaches; to serve as a major jumping off point for further research into the specific fields covered by each of the authors, who have been carefully chosen for their specific expertise; to demonstrate the global and total nature of the Second World War, giving due coverage to

the conflict in all major theatres and through the lens of the key combatants and neutrals; to examine issues of race, gender, ideology, and society during the war; and to function as a textbook from which teachers will be able to educate students as to the trends that have taken place in how the Second World War has been (and can be) interpreted in the modern world.

As editor, I find it necessary to express my thanks to four people without whom the volume could not have been completed: my publisher, Dr. Eve Setch at Routledge, who first proposed the idea of such a volume to me over a delightful lunch in London as a far back as early 2017; Dr. Karl James, Chief Historian at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra, who (with his team) suggested the names of several scholars in specialist fields who I was then able to approach for inclusion in this volume; my dear friend and colleague Michael Dickerman, of Stockton University, New Jersey, for help in a variety of capacities from the volume's inception; colleagues who agreed to serve as blind peer reviewers; and, finally, though by no means least, full acknowledgement and thanks are due to Eve Grimm, who served as Project Manager throughout, keeping my eye on the ball and providing assistance to the chapter authors from the very beginning.

I would also like to acknowledge the ongoing encouragement of my home institution throughout the duration of the project, Florida Gulf Coast University. Several of the chapters here have been written by colleagues with whom it was my pleasure to teach and interact over a lengthy period, and I am delighted to record what a joy it was for me to work with them.

Of course, my thanks must also go to the many outstanding scholars who have contributed to this volume, some of whom composed their chapters in situations of personal difficulty, tight timelines, or crushing work demands during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. To one and all, my sincere thanks.

Paul R. Bartrop
Melbourne and Fort Myers

PART 1

OUTBREAKS

War to world war

1

AVOIDING WAR? BRITISH DIPLOMACY AND THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN 1939

Paul R. Bartrop

On 3 September 1939, a photograph was snapped of a newspaper vendor in London. The day was auspicious; at 11:00 a.m. a British ultimatum to Germany had expired, and the two countries were at war. The man was holding a bulletin, half his own size, that read "WAR DECLARED (OFFICIAL)." The newspaper was the *News of the World*, but the words "*News of the*" were obscured; for generations since, the photo appears to read "WORLD WAR DECLARED."

Germany had been at war with Poland for two days already; with Britain and its empire from 11:00 a.m.; and with France from 5:00 p.m. That was all. While Japan and China had been waging their own bitter conflict from 1937, this had had not spread elsewhere. On 3 September 1939, however, there was no world war. At least, not yet.

The assumption has most often been made that the events of September saw the beginning of the Second World War. While this was not the case on the day itself, it was nevertheless a start, and from this moment on things escalated into the greatest conflict the world had (or has) ever seen.

The years of appeasement by Britain and France have been discussed, debated, and dissected ever since the appearance of A.J.P. Taylor's remarkable revisionist work *The Origins of the Second World War* in 1961.[1] Vast libraries have since appeared attempting to explain why war broke out in September 1939, with three major studies appearing in 2019 alone – each offering a specific pathway to understanding.[2]

Of interest in the current context, however, is not so much *why* the war broke out, as to what happened *when* it did so. What were the steps leading up to the actual outbreak? Were any of the actors involved more central than others? Indeed, can the crisis be viewed through the lens of a single individual – and would doing so add anything? This chapter will examine the events leading up to 3 September 1939 from the perspective of the British ambassador to Berlin, Sir Nevile Henderson, with a view to tracing the war's outbreak via a focused study of one of the principal players in this most critical of dramas.

Born on 10 June 1882, Nevile Meyrick Henderson came from a wealthy manufacturing background. His father had been a director of the Bank of England and owned a large estate at Sedgwick Park, near Horsham, Sussex. The young Henderson attended Eton and joined the Foreign Office in May 1905. After several junior postings at St. Petersburg, Tokyo, Paris, and Constantinople, he was sent to Belgrade

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(1929) and Buenos Aires (1935) as ambassador before being assigned to Berlin in March 1937.

The story of Henderson's early tenure in Berlin has been recounted in detail by his biographer, Peter Neville, and will not be repeated here.[3] It is sufficient to say that from the start he showed a marked sympathy not only with the objectives of Hitler's Germany[4] but also to avoiding war in Europe. Before he left Buenos Aires for Berlin, he wrote later, he felt that he had been "specially selected by Providence" to help preserve the peace of the world.[5] He was convinced that "the peace of Europe depended upon the realisation of an understanding between Britain and Germany,"[6] and "who was I to condemn the Nazis off-hand or before they had finally proved themselves incurably vicious?"[7] He thus saw it as his duty "to try to cooperate with the Nazi Government to the best of my ability."[8]

As Henderson's subsequent positions were to show, his support for Germany's foreign policy objectives often blinded him to the realities of dealing with an expansionist dictator like Adolf Hitler. In the prologue to his post-outbreak memoir *Failure of a Mission*, he was at pains to point out what he saw as the two "commandments" of a diplomat: first, "faithfully to interpret the views of his own Government to the Government to which he is accredited" and, second, "to explain, no less accurately, the views and standpoint of the Government of the country in which he is stationed to the Government of his own country."[9] His conduct as ambassador at Berlin often found itself at variance with his definition of the diplomat's duties.

Throughout the crucial year of 1938, during which Germany annexed Austria in March and brought Europe to the brink of war over the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in September, Henderson advocated continually in favor of what he saw as Germany's "legitimate claims" based on the principle of national self-determination. This was not always to his advantage. Regarding the German takeover of Austria, the Foreign Secretary, Viscount Halifax, cautioned him "not to go beyond any instructions given or diminish in subsequent conversation force of any protest you may be instructed to make."[10] Regarding the Sudetenland crisis in September, Henderson pushed hard for the Czechs to be cowed into submission. As he wrote on 4 September, "only direct compulsion" of Czech President Edvard Beneš "would ever induce" him to "see realities."[11] Earlier, he had written that the Sudeten Germans, "have, in my opinion, a moral right at least to self-determination. It is morally unjust to compel this solid Teuton minority to remain subjected to a Slav central Government at Prague."[12] While he had little role to play due to the negotiations having been taken over personally at Munich by Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, Henderson's views were in lock step with Chamberlain's – as distinct from many at the Foreign Office, who found themselves in a constant struggle with Downing Street over the execution of foreign policy.[13]

On 18 October 1938, Henderson returned to London for medical treatment and surgery for the cancer that would eventually take his life in 1942. He remained for just under four months, during which he took time for reflection. When he returned to Berlin on 13 February 1939, he was somewhat optimistic as to the future of Anglo-German relations: the Sudeten crisis of the previous September was long over, and Hitler had guaranteed the new frontiers of what remained of Czechoslovakia. "Germany's radical ambitions," Henderson wrote, "had now been satisfied," and what remained "seemed small questions"[14] that could be resolved through negotiation. He

also believed that Hitler was on the road to respectability, writing to Halifax that "My definite impression since my return here is that Herr Hitler does not contemplate any adventures at the moment and that all stories and rumours to the contrary are completely without foundation."[15]

The Czechoslovakia that was left following Munich was far smaller than it had been beforehand, and the Czechs and Slovaks had little regard for each other. The Czechs, industrialized, urbanized, and highly educated, dominated the rural, backward Slovaks. Hitler now sponsored the Slovaks in their calls for greater autonomy and eventual self-determination. By early March 1939, small incidents began to break out between Czechs and Slovaks whilst, with Hitler's full encouragement, "The Vienna radio was busily inciting Slovaks against Czechs."[16] On 10 March, Czech President Emil Hácha, in response to these incidents, dismissed Slovak Prime Minister Jozef Tiso, occupied the Slovak capital Bratislava with Czech troops and police, and installed a more friendly administration.

Summoning Tiso to Berchtesgaden, Hitler prompted him to proclaim, on March 14, a breakaway "Slovak Free State." The next day, the German army marched into Prague and occupied the Czech lands, now called the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia.

Henderson considered that the fault lay with the Czechs, who had engineered a crisis ready-made for a Hitler response. He saw, however, that Hitler had finally proven to the world the type of man he was, his earlier views regarding German righteousness now shaken. In a dispatch to Halifax, he wrote that

> The utter cynicism and immorality of the whole performance defies description. Nazism has definitely crossed the Rubicon of purity of race and German unity and answer to this form of Pan-Germanism can only in the end be Pan-Slavism. It is difficult to believe that the fate of the Czechs will not induce the remaining Slav branches to take counsel together. . . . The annexation of Bohemia and Moravia . . . is entirely contrary to right of self-determination and utterly immoral.[17]

He also made clear his wish that the British government would "consider what attitude to adopt towards a Government which has shown itself incapable of observing an agreement not six months old and which is apparently set on domination by force of the whole of the Danube basin."[18]

Instructed by Halifax to protest to the German government,[19] Henderson had already done so to the German foreign minister, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Ernst von Weizsäcker, state secretary at the Foreign Office, by the time the directive arrived. By far the greatest form of protest, however, came on 17 March, when Henderson was ordered to return to London for an indefinite period "to report."[20]

After five weeks' absence, he returned on 25 April. In the meantime, the pace of developments had quickened. Germany had submitted stiff demands to Poland concerning Danzig and the Polish Corridor, which had been rejected; German-speaking Memel, in Lithuania, had been annexed; Britain and France had concluded pacts of mutual assistance to Poland, Greece, and Romania; and Albania had been invaded and annexed by Italy. And, for the first occasion in peacetime, Britain decided to introduce a measure of compulsory military service.

Henderson walked straight into the Polish–German crisis over Danzig. On 26 April, Hitler addressed the Reichstag with an offer to Poland concerning a rearrangement of existing arrangements in the Free City, calling for Danzig to be returned to the Reich and extraterritorial access for Germany through the Polish Corridor. Upon Poland rejecting these demands, he terminated the German-Polish Agreement of 1934; for good measure, he also denounced the Anglo-German Naval Treaty of 1935.

Henderson had long regarded the return of Danzig to Germany as "a foregone conclusion."[21] In a letter to Halifax dated 4 May, he wrote that did not think this was a cause for which Britain should go to war:

> The German case . . . is very far from being either unjustifiable or immoral. If an impartial Martian were to act as arbitrator I cannot believe that he would give judgement otherwise than more or less in accordance with Hitler's offer. . . . My thesis has always been that Germany cannot revert to normalcy which, under pressure of public opinion, she might well yet do, until her legitimate (in German eyes) aspirations have been satisfied.[22]

Using the same reasoning as he had during earlier crises, he asked himself:

> whether, if we are going to fight Germany, is it well-advised to do so on a ground on which the world will not be united as to the immorality of Germany's case? Will even our Empire be united? . . . I am appalled at the thought of Danzig being even the ostensible cause [of war], and I am even more appalled at our fate being in the hands of the Poles. Heroic no doubt but foolhardy and ask anyone who knows them whether they can be trusted.[23]

In the days following, he was under no illusions regarding the future, as he concluded in a private letter to Halifax:

> there is little hope . . . for peace unless fate steps in and somehow contrives the downfall of Hitler and his gangsters. Failing the hand of Providence, I do not believe that this can be done by any means short of war with all its ghastly implications. If so, possibly better now than later.[24]

This did not, however, mean he advocated war with Germany: "will it not be a tragic mistake for us to fight the German nation again – if it can possibly be avoided? Once is an experience but twice is vice."[25]

Henderson's somewhat complicated view of the state of European affairs thus ran along the following lines. To begin with, he could feel only revulsion for Germany's ill faith in tearing up the Munich Agreement and invading Czechoslovakia; he believed that, consequently, Europe's smaller states should combine in a "peace front" for mutual defense against further German aggression. He felt that war between Britain and Germany was inevitable but that before this occurred there would be a period of comparative quiet; and although there were already the beginnings of a crisis over Danzig, this should not be allowed to develop into war, as Britain had no moral right to deny the Germans or the Danzigers the legitimate union they demanded. Further,

it was not the Germans who were at fault but the Poles, and Britain was being dragged into a possible war over an issue that could easily be settled through negotiation.

This was a forlorn hope. Following the 31 March 1939 announcement of the Anglo-French guarantee to Poland, Henderson felt that "We had reached the last act of the drama, and the curtain for it had gone up."[26] In the meantime, there was the comparative lull which he had foreseen. Although there was, he saw, "great activity" in military affairs all over Europe, "nothing was being done at the moment which might not reasonably be attributed to normal exercises during an abnormal period."[27]

The months of June and July, which seemed to pass quickly, were mainly a time of functions and socializing, with diplomatic activity in Berlin not as intense as it had been a year earlier. The main action was centered not in Berlin or Warsaw, but in Moscow. An alliance that Britain and France were seeking with the Soviet Union – rejected in April as "premature" by the Western Powers after a Soviet approach – had now become an obsession. So, "[a]s in 1938, so once again in 1939, the summer months were spent in fruitless negotiation."[28]

Throughout this period, Henderson was continually "preaching patience and giving solemn warnings to all and sundry. My main, and indeed almost sole, object was to convince the Germans that any further act of aggression by them would mean war with Britain."[29] Yet his German contacts were generally restricted only to Ernst von Weizsäcker and the second most powerful Nazi after Hitler, Hermann Göring (with whom Henderson had a very solid personal relationship). Joachim von Ribbentrop, and Hitler himself, were somewhat aloof. Moreover, Henderson's contacts among other diplomats in Berlin were highly selective, even restricted. His closest diplomatic associates were also his closest personal friends in Berlin – the Italian ambassador Dr. Bernardo Attolico and his Belgian counterpart, Vicomte Jacques Davignon. Some contact was also kept with the South African minister, Dr. S.F.N. Gie. Very few reports exist showing contact with the French or Polish ambassadors during this vital period.

While negotiations were dragging on at Moscow, Henderson wrote to Sir Alexander Cadogan, the permanent head of the Foreign Office in London, in which, he said,

> I feel intuitively that the Germans are getting at Stalin. . . . [I]f Poland does not talk a little less about her bravery and think a little more about the realities of her geographical position, we may yet live to see a fourth Partition [of Poland].[30]

Given this, he favored a pact with the Soviet Union that could stop Hitler but did not think it would provide a reasonable basis for any sort of further understanding.

In the climate that was developing, he felt that nobody desired war except the Poles. As early as 20 June, he wrote to Cadogan that "The champagne of freedom and our guarantee has gone to the head of the Poles and they are a reckless race anyway."[31] Nearly a month later, he gave a clear indication regarding the importance of a settlement over Danzig, writing to Halifax that nothing would:

> ever convince me that the Poles are not supremely foolish, if they fail to make the best bargain now with Hitler himself that they can. Danzig cannot be left as a running sore, otherwise, in the end, the Poles will lose the Corridor itself

> which is a much bigger question than Danzig and one in which the Germans are far more interested than Danzig.[32]

A few days later, Halifax wrote that he had noticed what seemed to both him and the Foreign Office "a misjudgment of what we believe to be the Polish attitude."[33] He proceeded to explain that

> From all the information which we have, and I hope we have been passing it on to you, it seems pretty plain that the Poles are not going to do anything provocative at Danzig and are in fact playing their cards with great prudence and restraint.[34]

Henderson was not convinced. Responding a few days later, he wrote that he realized his views:

> are sometimes unorthodox. I live on the other side of the Rhine. British internal politics are not my affair and if I may well see too much of the other man's view, in England one may well see too little. What you say about my misjudging the Polish attitude as it appears to you is a case in point. I regard it as essential that the Poles, in their own ultimate interest, should be persuaded to be reasonable. . . . I would not trust some excitable Polish Colonel or provincial government not to put a match to the powder. . . . The Poles are an excitable people who love talking about their bravery.[35]

He then gave Halifax perhaps the clearest indication yet made regarding what he thought of his role in Berlin, noting that "It seems to be my fate to preach unpopular causes both in Germany and London."[36] It was important to realize that it was the Poles who wanted war, not the Germans. The Polish government, emboldened by the Anglo-French guarantee, and intensely fearful of German intentions, sought war as a means of ending once and for all any disputes the two countries have or might be likely to have in the future.[37] He was convinced that Hitler personally did not want war but that extremists in the Nazi party were forcing his hand. As early as 24 June he wrote that "War is such a horrible affair that not even Hitler will recklessly instigate a world war. But he may get easily carried away."[38] On 17 July, he declared that Hitler "is not prepared to risk his life's work on a single throw," and that, as a result, "will consequently move cautiously."[39]

Throughout July there had been practically no contact, diplomatic or otherwise, between the Polish and German governments. This rigidly enforced silence between the two countries, plus the lack of progress of the Anglo-French negotiations at Moscow, indicated to Henderson that "the barometer might suddenly and rapidly fall."[40] There were also, as he saw, other indications. The situation at Danzig, for example, was deteriorating as overzealous Poles and Germans, vying for position, precipitated small incidents which, on several occasions, came close to growing into major confrontations. In addition, as he wrote later, was that "the German army was rapidly nearing the completion of its pre-mobilisation preparations. Three or four days at most would now suffice to put it on a full war footing."[41] His conclusion was that "Hitler would shortly be able to choose his own moment for precipitating the crisis,

and I was more than ever certain that the last week of August would prove to be zero hour."[42]

Indeed, all the signs were beginning to point in that direction, especially considering that, between 4 and 10 August, diplomatic notes had passed between Warsaw and Berlin for little result. The situation seemed to be building to a climax. Germany, Britain, France, and Poland were all equally firm in standing by their respective positions, and none, it appeared, would back off. This belief prompted Henderson to say to von Weizsäcker on 16 August that

> What was done could not now be undone. We seemed to be rapidly drifting towards . . . a situation in which neither side would be in a position to give way and from which war would ensue. . . . I was prepared to believe that Germany would not yield to intimidation. Nor certainly could His Majesty's Government. If Germany resorted to force, we would resist with force. There could be no possible doubt whatsoever about that.[43]

Despite this, Henderson was still convinced both about Hitler's pacific intentions and the foolhardiness of the Poles, as two letters he wrote to senior officials at the Foreign Office indicated. In the first, to Sir William Strang, he wrote that "Of all Germans, believe it or not, Hitler is the most moderate so far as Danzig and the Corridor are concerned."[44] The second letter, to Sir Orme Sargent, said that:

> If war is fated to be, then it will be. But it will be the stupidest of wars and history will say that the world was quite mad. . . . When a war atmosphere is created the particular circumstances out of which war arises are comparatively a matter of indifference. The Poles will, I believe and fear, get a terrible hammering and I cannot see what they can definitely gain out of it. To enlarge their frontiers will merely mean trouble, possibly from both sides, in the next generation. I only pray that we shall not regret leading them up the garden path for the satisfaction of kicking Hitler and his Nazi gangsters in the pants.[45]

Although the possibility of war was growing as each day progressed, Henderson still held out hope that somehow it might be averted. On each of 18 August and 20 August, he repeated a suggestion made some time previously that "a personal letter should be addressed by the Prime Minister to Hitler and delivered by some emissary from London."[46] It met with little response. The next day – 21 August – was to prove to Henderson that Hitler's pacific intentions were about as real as his promises, for on this day "the bombshell was exploded, announcing that negotiations had been concluded for the signature of a Russo-German non-aggression pact and that Ribbentrop would fly to Moscow on August 23rd to sign it."[47]

Though shocked, even then he could not bring himself to blame Germany for the démarche, as he recorded in a letter to Halifax the following morning:

> At least one cannot blame Germany (how she can reconcile such a pact with her anti-Comintern pact is her own business), but the treacherous cynicism of Stalin and Co., with our military missions sitting and negotiating at Moscow, is beyond belief.[48]

Angered more by Soviet dishonesty and hypocrisy than by the nature of the coup, he was aware of its implications, asking "What does His Majesty's Government do now? . . . We cannot leave Poland in the lurch, though we have, I fear, led her up the garden path as it is." His conclusion was that "Even at this eleventh hour I would go on urging her to re-establish direct contact."[49]

The final crisis saw the culmination of Henderson's tenure in Berlin, during which his sympathy for Germany's foreign policy objectives led him to interpret and execute both British and German foreign policy exactly the way it suited his own conceptions of what their direction should be.

After a meeting with Hitler on 25 August, during which the German leader presented the British government with proposals seeking to end the existing state of tension, Henderson flew to London to transmit them personally. Although he doubted the value of such proposals, he nonetheless believed that Germany's gesture for peace "could not be ignored."[50] The British government spent two vital days giving "the fullest and most careful consideration to Hitler's message,"[51] and on 28 August Henderson flew back to Berlin with the British reply. It, like most of the other messages sent to Berlin in the days following, read that Britain could not be expected not to fulfil its obligations to Poland and that reasonable negotiations for a settlement could only begin once Germany had abandoned its hostile attitude.

The next evening (29 August), Henderson again saw Hitler, who gave him his reply to transmit to London. He included a clause that the German government "counted upon the arrival in Berlin of a Polish Emissary with full powers" within 24 hours (that is, by midnight of 30 August), to bring the existing state of tension to a close.[52] During the ensuing conversation, Hitler told Henderson that, although he desired British friendship, "he did not intend to sacrifice therefor what he called vital German interests."[53] Asking Hitler to clarify what he meant, Henderson was referred to the document, "which stated that the German Government would immediately draw up proposals acceptable to themselves for a solution to the Polish question, and would place these at the disposal of the British Government before the arrival of the Polish negotiator"[54] – the negotiator being the "Polish Emissary with full powers."

Late that night, Henderson spoke with the Polish ambassador, Józef Lipski, and gave him an account of the German reply and his conversation with Hitler. He impressed upon Lipski the need for immediate action and "implored him to urge his Government to nominate without any delay someone to represent them in the proposed negotiations at Berlin."[55] He also said that "while I did not know the views of my Government, I myself felt that the Polish Government could not lose and should gain by making a last attempt to preserve peace."[56]

In Warsaw, the British ambassador to Poland, Sir Howard Kennard, did not share Henderson's enthusiasm for such a meeting. He had for a long time remonstrated with London that Henderson's dispatches from Berlin showed a pro-German bias:

> I feel sure that it would be impossible to induce the Polish Government to send [Foreign Minister] Colonel Beck or any other representative immediately to Berlin to discuss a settlement on basis proposed by Herr Hitler. They would certainly sooner fight and perish rather than submit to such humiliation after examples of Czecho-Slovakia, Lithuania and Austria.[57]

Halifax, in London, agreed. Early on the evening of 30 August, he notified Henderson that in view of the German government's insistence that a negotiator be sent from Warsaw to receive the German proposals, the British government "cannot advise Polish Government to comply with this procedure which is wholly unreasonable."[58] He added that Henderson "suggest to German Government that they adopt the normal procedure, when their proposals are ready, of inviting Polish Ambassador to call and handing proposals to him for transmission to Warsaw and inviting suggestions as to conduct of negotiations."[59]

This was the third significant message Henderson transmitted to the German government that day. The first had been a personal letter from Chamberlain notifying Hitler that Britain had asked the Polish government to take very stringent precautions to ensure that no provocative incidents took place and asking Hitler to ensure that Germany do the same. The second, from the Foreign Office, followed much the same line, while Halifax's message regarding procedure had been the third. Unable to see Ribbentrop during the day, Henderson had to wait until midnight before he could deliver these messages. The meeting was to be the first of two Henderson had that night and was to lead to his final attempt to coerce the Poles into sending a negotiator to Berlin.

Ribbentrop's attitude at the midnight meeting was one of "intense hostility."[60] Dr. Paul Schmidt, the German interpreter, was the only other person present; in his memoir, he later described the atmosphere as "highly charged," as "the nerves of the two men were [worn] by the protracted negotiations in which they had lately been involved." Ribbentrop, he noted, "was obviously in a state of almost shivering excitement."[61]

Henderson started reading the various communications, beginning with the statement that it was "unreasonable" to expect the British government to be able to produce a negotiator from Poland within the 24 hours stipulated in Hitler's 29 August message. On hearing this, Ribbentrop "flared up," saying "The time is up. . . . Where's the Pole your Government was to provide?"[62] He "shouted" at Henderson that the German government "demand that a negotiator" empowered by the Polish government "with full authority should come here to Berlin."[63] Moreover, the British government must pressure the Poles into complying, as Germany would not go cap-in-hand to the Poles directly. Ribbentrop refused to invite ambassador Lipski to see him. Such a course would, "he indignantly said, be utterly unthinkable and intolerable."[64]

When Henderson had finished recounting the contents of the British communications, Ribbentrop produced from his pocket "a lengthy document"[65] containing the proposals Hitler had promised on the evening of 29 August. Henderson later recalled that Ribbentrop read the proposals "out to me in German, or rather gabbled [them] through to me as fast as he could, in a tone of the utmost scorn and annoyance."[66] Ribbentrop was to dispute this in his memoir, writing that he explained the proposals "in detail."[67] Schmidt backed this assessment up, noting that Ribbentrop read out the proposals "in German, without, however, particularly hurrying over them as he was afterwards said to have done. On the contrary, he elaborated on some of the points."[68]

The way in which the proposals – of which there were 16 in all – were delivered to Henderson is important, as he could, he related later, only "gather the gist of six

or seven" of them.[69] When Ribbentrop had finished, Henderson asked to look at the proposals for himself, but Ribbentrop refused on the basis that as a Polish negotiator had not arrived by midnight, the question "could no longer be regarded as topical."[70]

Henderson was stunned. So was Schmidt, who recalled later that he "became agitated." He suddenly saw, he wrote,

> the game which Hitler and Ribbentrop were playing. At that moment I understood that Hitler's high-sounding proposals had been produced only for show, and were never intended to be put into effect. The refusal to hand the document over to Henderson was made for fear that the British Government would pass on the proposals to the Poles, who might well have accepted them. Seldom have I so much regretted that, as interpreter, I could not intervene in the discussion.[71]

Henderson saw full well that the implications of Ribbentrop's refusal to hand over the document.[72] The interview ended, and he returned to the British embassy "convinced that the last hope for peace had vanished."[73]

He decided, however, to make one final attempt at preserving it. Immediately upon returning, he telephoned Józef Lipski at the Polish embassy and asked him to come over. As historians Martin Gilbert and Richard Gott have observed, this was Henderson's "moment of power."[74] Although he had telegraphed London on no fewer than two occasions after returning from his meeting with Ribbentrop,[75] he had not informed anyone of what had transpired: the argument with Ribbentrop; his request to Lipski to call on him; or Hitler's 16 proposals. In fact, he only transmitted the details of the evening's events at 5:15 a.m. on 31 August; they were received at the Foreign Office at 9:30 a.m. As a result, Henderson was the only foreign official, in Berlin or out of it, to know of the 16 points until he saw Lipski at 2:00 a.m. That he saw Lipski at all was contrary to diplomatic practice, for he had no authorization from London to do so. The Foreign Office did not yet even know of the existence of the points he was communicating to Lipski, or that they were meeting.

Lipski's account of their discussion corroborates Henderson's own description:

> In our conversation he was able only to reproduce to me some provisions [of Hitler's document]. . . . Nevertheless the offer, as such, impressed him as being "on the whole not too unreasonable." For this reason he urged me to approach Ribbentrop, still on the same night, with the request to convey to me the terms with reference to his conversation with the British ambassador.[76]

In addition, Henderson gave Lipski "an objective and studiously moderate account"[77] of his interview with Ribbentrop, and in consequence suggested recommending to the Polish government that it propose immediately a meeting in Berlin between Polish Field-Marshal Edward Śmigły-Rydz and Hermann Göring.[78]

Henderson did this without Halifax's knowledge or approval. It will be remembered that earlier, on the evening of 30 August, Halifax had informed Henderson that the attitude of the British government to the German demand for a Polish negotiator was "wholly unreasonable," so he was thus directly contravening instructions.

Lipski probably already knew of the official British attitude and took little notice of Henderson's suggestions. He did, however, promise to contact Warsaw to find out what course of action to take, though this was not until much later that morning.

Lipski's slowness to act worried Henderson greatly during 31 August. When Henderson tried to contact him at the embassy around 9:00 a.m., he was told that the Polish ambassador was out on a walk and could not be reached. Even then, however, Henderson held out some hope, writing to Halifax that:

> the absolute essential thing is that the Polish Ambassador here should not lose a minute in getting in touch with German Government. Consequences may be immense if he does not, even if it is only to gain time. I understand that the Polish Government is still hesitating to give him instructions in view of procedure. Can procedure be allowed to stand in the way at such a moment? . . . I can only suggest that the Polish Government be insistently told to give the Ambassador here immediate instructions, at least to ask the German Government for text of the German proposals for urgent communication to his Government with a view to dispatch of plenipotentiary.[79]

During the morning, he saw a more detailed form of the proposals "from another source in touch with Goering,"[80] and reiterated his earlier belief that the terms "sound moderate to me."[81]

Sir Howard Kennard, in Warsaw, was quick to reply. On the night of 31 August, he telegraphed to Halifax:

> His Majesty's Ambassador at Berlin appears to consider German terms reasonable. I fear that I cannot agree with him from point of view of Warsaw. While to the uninitiated they may seem plausible Polish Government will certainly regard them as an attempt to strangle her under the cloak of legality.[82]

Henderson had convinced himself that his course was the correct one. Although he knew the British government's view regarding the German demand about sending a negotiator from Poland; had read Kennard's dispatch; and had been told by Ribbentrop that there was no need to send a negotiator, as the time limit in which to do so had run out at midnight on the 30th, nonetheless he still hoped that peace could be saved. In a dispatch predated by a few hours to 1 September, he telegraphed Halifax:

> I can only suggest that Polish Government be urged in unmistakable language that they should announce tomorrow, in the light of German proposals which have now been made public, their intention to send a Plenipotentiary to Berlin to discuss in general terms these proposals. I would further suggest that Plenipotentiary should be a Polish Marshal which might result in negotiations being conducted between him and Field-Marshal Göring instead of Herr von Ribbentrop.[83]

Even after the first reports of a German attack on Poland on the morning of 1 September had begun to filter through to Berlin and London, he believed there might still be a chance of peace if "Marshal Smigly-Rydz . . . announce[d] his readiness to

come immediately to Germany to discuss as soldier and plenipotentiary the whole question with Field-Marshal Göring."[84] The time for talking and negotiating, however, was over. Śmigły-Rydz was in the field, and war between Germany and Poland had begun.

In London, Viscount Halifax, in a message sent to Sir Howard Kennard hours before the invasion, remained convinced "as to the undesirability of a visit" by Polish Foreign Minister Beck to Berlin,[85] though not quite understanding why the Poles should feel reticent about Lipski seeing Ribbentrop.[86] As it turned out, he had already done so. Kennard replied that Lipski had met with the German foreign minister at 6:30 p.m. the evening before and expressed Poland's readiness to enter into direct negotiations[87] – but now, in view of the German attack, any further representations would, in another dispatch written and sent at 7:43 p.m. on 1 September, be "clearly useless."[88] Moreover, it was learned later that after having met with Ribbentrop, Lipski had tried to contact his government in Warsaw but was unable to do so in view of the fact that communications between Berlin and the Polish capital had been closed off by the German government.[89]

At 5:45 p.m. on 1 September, Henderson was instructed by Halifax to seek an audience with Ribbentrop in which he was to state that unless the German government was prepared to give Britain satisfactory assurances that it had suspended all aggressive action against Poland and was prepared promptly to withdraw its forces from Polish territory, "His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will without hesitation fulfil their obligations to Poland."[90]

This was not an ultimatum so much as a statement of intention. No time limit was placed on German compliance, other than that Germany should withdraw its forces "promptly." Later that evening, Henderson saw Ribbentrop to convey the message and said that he needed an immediate answer. Ribbentrop replied that he would have to consult with Hitler, to which Henderson said he would be available "at whatever time he might be in a position to give the Chancellor's answer."[91]

Earlier that day, Henderson prepared his embassy for evacuation. He arranged with the United States *chargé d'affaires* to take over British interests in the event of war and oversaw the destruction of all ciphers and confidential documents. Embassy staff were moved out of their private homes and concentrated in the Adlon Hotel or the embassy itself. The next day, Monday 2 September, passed as "a day of suspense."[92] Henderson presented a note giving a verbatim report of Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's speech to the House of Commons earlier in the day, in which Britain's warning was reaffirmed to the British people. As it turned out, no reply was received.

"Accordingly," Henderson later wrote,

> in the early hours (4 a.m.) of September 3rd I was . . . instructed by His Majesty's Government to arrange for a meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs at 9 a.m. There was some difficulty in establishing contact with the Ministry at that hour, but I was finally informed that Dr. Schmidt was authorised by the Minister to accept on his Excellency's behalf any communication which I might make to him. I accordingly handed to Dr. Schmidt, at 9 a.m. precisely, the final ultimatum from His Majesty's Government. . . . Dr. Schmidt received this communication and undertook to deliver it immediately to his chief. As no reply from the German Government was vouchsafed by 11 a.m.,

> the German representative in London was informed in due course at that hour that a state of war existed between Britain and Germany.[93]

Shortly after 11:00 a.m., Henderson received a final message from the German Foreign Ministry saying that Ribbentrop wished to see him immediately. Arriving at 11:30, Henderson was handed "a lengthy document." This began with "a refusal on the part of the German people to accept any demands in the nature of an ultimatum made by the British Government," and stated that "any aggressive action by England would be answered with the same weapons and in the same form."[94] The rest of the document, according to Henderson, was "pure propaganda, destined presumably for home and neutral consumption, with a view to attempting to prove to the German people and the world generally that it was Britain alone who was to blame for everything which has happened."[95] Henderson commented to Ribbentrop on reading this that "It will be left to history to judge where the blame really lies."[96] After wishing each other personal good fortune, the two then parted company for the final time.

War had begun, and, while it was not yet the Second World War, it was, nonetheless, the first of a series of declarations and conflicts that would join up across the next six years to become so.

For Sir Nevile Henderson, "My mission to Berlin had terminated, and the failure was complete."[97] Yet it was, arguably, over long before this. That he did not realize that the preservation of peace was a task too great for a man in his position, especially given his views on a variety of crucial issues relating to Nazi Germany, is only a small part of his failure, which lay in the fact that throughout 1939 he fought for a cause that was no longer viable and had little chance of success in the first place.

Did Henderson's presence in Berlin have any influence on the outcome? It was as if his very being was dominated by a maxim coined by his Italian contemporary Daniele Varè, that "a war delayed might be a war averted."[98] Would war have broken out regardless of whether he was in Berlin? The answer, unquestionably, is yes. War was going to happen irrespective of Henderson. His importance, however, lay in the fact that he spent much of his time advocating desperately a pro-appeasement stance to placate the Germans for what seemed, to him, to be legitimate ambitions. His dispatches to London did not "faithfully interpret" the views of his government to that of Germany," nor did he "explain, no less accurately," the views and standpoint of the German government back to London. Moreover, at the very peak of the crisis precipitating war, he stepped out of his role as an emissary and attempted to force the Polish ambassador to act in a manner contrary to stated British policy. Perhaps, in this sense, a different comment by Daniele Varè might have been more apposite: "We distinguish good diplomacy from bad diplomacy by the results obtained and by the price paid."[99] For all his efforts, the results were none, the price incalculable.

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2

PLANNING ARMAGEDDON

Operation Barbarossa

David Stahel

In the 12th century, 751 years before Adolf Hitler's launch of Operation Barbarossa, the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick I launched his own crusade to the East seeking to return Jerusalem to Christian rule. Frederick, who was known by his Italian nickname "Barbarossa" (Red Beard), became a folk hero of Germanic mythology, supposedly having never died and instead slept beneath the Kyffhäuser mountain in Thuringia awaiting Germany's hour of need to return. In December 1940, with Germany already at war with a host of Allied nations, Hitler committed himself to a new war in the East, which would proceed on an unprecedented scale and was intended to win for Germany an enormous new empire. More than just another campaign, Hitler conceived of the new war as a self-professed crusade to the East for which no sacrifice would be too great. Underlining the magnitude of this new undertaking, Hitler evoked Barbarossa's name, with all the symbolism of a legendary savior, to headline the largest military operation ever conceived.

This chapter sets out the year-long planning phase for Operation Barbarossa and assesses both the scope and scale of the military undertaking as well as the parallel "war of annihilation" that reflected Germany's longer-term plans in the East. Importantly, planning for both the conventional war at the front and ideological war in the occupied areas proceeded with remarkable unanimity. Practical problems were dismissed, best-case scenarios were assumed, and ethical considerations were entirely absent. The postwar "myth of the Wehrmacht" was not just covering the complicity of the German military in criminal activity, it also extended to their own professional corruption in the conception and conduct of major campaigns.

On 22 June 1940, France signed the armistice ending the Western campaign and handing the German army victory on its only remaining active front. Poland, Denmark, Norway, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg had all been subdued. Western and Central Europe were firmly in Hitler's grip, while his new Italian ally opened additional fronts against the British in East and North Africa. However, the Luftwaffe's failure to subdue the Royal Air Force in the Battle of Britain forestalled any seaborne invasion of the British Isles (Operation Sea Lion) and rendered the war a strategic stalemate. This posed long-term economic dangers to Germany, as it was subject to a British naval blockade, which Hitler only managed to subvert thanks to the August 1939 signing of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact (otherwise referred to as the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), which ensured huge imports of vital raw materials in exchange for manufactured goods. While on the surface the pact promised a new degree of economic cooperation

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between Hitler and Stalin, what really united the two dictators was the secret agreement on spheres of influence in Eastern Europe and Finland.

Stalin moved quickly to absorb his share of the territory, and the remarkable successes Germany achieved in the west added to his sense of urgency. Finland had already been forcibly made to yield territory in the Winter War (1939–1940), and by the middle of June 1940 the Baltic States were completely occupied and eventually absorbed into the Soviet empire as member republics. June also saw Soviet forces occupying the Romanian regions of Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, heightening German fears that Soviet ambitions might extend as far as Romania's oil fields at Ploeşti, which were vital to Germany's war economy.

> With these concerns in mind, and indeed before the Soviet armies had completed their occupations on the Baltic and in Romania, the first operational plans were drawn up to provide contingencies in the unlikely event of a Soviet attack. This original plan envisaged an offensive type of defense, which placed emphasis on blunting the initial attack and then launching a counteroffensive at the earliest possible opportunity. As the Chief of the Army General Staff, Franz Halder, observed in his diary on 18 June: "Everything we have should be used for offensive action."[1] Importantly, however, these plans were devised by the army without any instruction from Hitler and were contingent upon a Soviet attack.

The first indication that Hitler was considering his own war in the East came weeks later, on 21 July, when the commander-in-chief of the army, Walter von Brauchitsch, received new instructions. Hitler told him that Britain was beaten but that Churchill continued the war only in the hope that either the Soviet Union or the United States would soon come to his aid. Accordingly, Hitler concluded Germany had to "smash the Russian army," which the army estimated would require between 80 and 100 German divisions and they could be expected to encounter only 50 to 75 "good" Soviet divisions.[2] That Hitler's judgment was still flushed by the unexpected ease of the victory over France appears evident from his comment that a Soviet campaign would be nothing more difficult than "child's play" (*Sandkastenspiel*).[3] Importantly, at this point Hitler did not yet see the invasion of the Soviet Union as the long prophesied showdown with Bolshevism and the achievement of "living space" (*Lebensraum*) but, rather, as a chiefly strategic maneuver, designed to clarify to the British the hopelessness of their situation and win a favorable peace for Germany.[4]

On 31 July, a major military conference took place at the Berghof, Hitler's mountain retreat. Here the dictator restated his belief that the British cause was a hopeless one without the United States or the Soviet Union, which led him once again to justify the invasion of the Soviet Union. He believed this would have the dual effect of directly removing one threat and simultaneously eliminating the other by consequence of the tremendously increased power Japan would enjoy in the Far East and the Pacific.[5] Hitler also settled on the timing for the attack, opting to wait until 1941. As Halder recorded his speech:

> With Russia smashed Britain's last hope would be shattered. . . . Decision: Russia's destruction must therefore be made part of this struggle. Spring

> 1941. The sooner Russia is crushed the better. Attack achieves its purpose only if Russian state can be shattered to its roots with one blow. . . . If we start in May 1941 we would have five months to finish the job.[6]

The conference on 31 July formalized the effort to prepare operational studies for war against the Soviet Union and can therefore be identified as a watershed in Hitler's strategic conception. Significantly, this momentous news was met by Hitler's most senior commanders without protest or dispute and stands in sharp contrast to the impassioned disputes arising from the timing and operational plans for the western campaign.[7] The unquestioning compliance of Hitler's commanders speaks to their collective dismissal of Soviet power but also to the extension of the "Hitler myth" to the military sphere. The acceptance of the decision to invade the Soviet Union cloaks the twisted logic that underscored the whole campaign. Hitler reasoned that to deny Great Britain its final hope of Soviet involvement in the war, an invasion of that country was necessary. There was some thought given to the potential that a rearmed and large Soviet army might pose to German hegemony in Europe, but these concerns were not permitted to interfere with the strategic planning in the summer of 1940.[8] Indeed, it was concluded that Soviet prospects for offensive action in Europe posed concerns for Romania and Finland, but there were certainly not believed to be any aggressive intentions toward Germany.[9]

Following the defeat of France, the German army was to be reduced in the size to just 120 divisions, yet the demands of a major new campaign in the east prompted Hitler to reverse his earlier decision and increase the size of the army to a new total of 180 divisions. This gave the two principal draft invasion plans, prepared by Major-General Erich Marcks and Lieutenant-Colonel Bernhard von Lossberg, scope for massive deployments. Marcks finished his study first, which Lossberg read and incorporated into his own plan. Unlike Marcks, who anticipated a significant Soviet withdrawal into the depths of the country, Lossberg disagreed and believed the Red Army would most likely seek to hold the Germans close to their western border, especially in the south. In Lossberg's estimation, both the Soviet Union's status as a military power and the valuable economic importance of Ukraine made retreat highly unlikely.[10]

Lossberg's plan called for three simultaneous thrusts into the Soviet Union, each directed by its own army group and deployed to the north (two groups) and to the south (one group) of the Pripet Marshes. Of the two northerly army groups, one would attack through the Baltic States across the Dvina and seize Leningrad, while the second and most powerful army group, equipped with the bulk of the motorized and panzer divisions, would proceed due east toward Moscow with encirclement battles centered on Minsk and Smolensk. For the southern army group, Lossberg envisaged two main areas of concentration, one striking from southern Poland and the other from Romania along the northern bank of the Black Sea. The goal was to enact a double envelopment of Soviet forces between the Pripet Marshes and the Black Sea, eradicating resistance before attempting a crossing of the Dnepr River.[11]

Just as Marcks had done, Lossberg's plan never questioned the *ability* of the Wehrmacht to achieve victory and concerned itself only with the best method of achieving that end. His outline of the campaign included no timetable for operations and is remarkably vague concerning the critical advance of the main army groups. There appears a wanton lack of consideration for the difficulties of Soviet countermeasures

and an astounding underestimation of the size and robustness of the Soviet economy. Lossberg believed that, even if one considered the Ural industrial area, it was "impossible that Russia can remain capable of resistance after losing her western territories and contact with the seas."[12] Significantly, Lossberg perceived more clearly than Marcks the tremendous field of operations in which the campaign would have to be fought, and consequently planned his initial strategic movements with some consideration for the difficulties of logistics and supply in mind. He sought to alleviate the strain on standard resources by emphasizing the use of captured broad gauge Soviet trains, which he hoped could be acquired in the newly won regions. Lossberg sought to underline this point by stating that without the use of Soviet railways to facilitate the latter stages of the advance, "a transport system based only on roads will be insufficient."[13] However, in spite of Lossberg's enhanced consideration for the operation of large armies over such great distances, his improvised remedies were woefully inadequate when, in conclusion, he resolved to select the final line of advance, Archangel-Gorki-Volga (to Stalingrad)-Don (to the Black Sea).[14] For the single campaigning season envisaged, such an effort represents an optimism that had transcended into hubris and folly.

The blind supposition of success among the very body charged with establishing the operational parameters and feasibility of the campaign, is evidence of the "closed circle" of discussion and debate that was fostered within the army general staff. The exuberant confidence in an eastern campaign, no doubt boosted by the spectacular collapse of France only weeks before, also reflected long-held prejudices of a racial and cultural kind, which memories of the First World War appeared only to confirm.[15] Olaf Groehler has suggested a so-called "Tannenberg myth" pervaded the army, contrasting a "natural" German military superiority with barbaric Russian hordes capable of atrocities.[16] In addition, Germany's academic experts on the east (*Ostforscher*) were profoundly influenced by entrenched stereotypes, adding a guise of merit to the ingrained anti-Slavic and anti-Bolshevik beliefs.[17] As the inferior "foe-image" supported central precepts of the national socialist agenda and paralleled prevailing views already widespread within the armed forces, one begins to identify how such audacious liberties could be taken in the early planning of the eastern campaign. Yet such self-deception cannot simply be passed over as the by-products of blatant ignorance or diehard prejudices. The general staff demonstrated a wanton lack of professionalism, ignoring unfavorable intelligence and failing to seriously consider such critical questions as logistics, climate, and the imposing spaces which extended not only the depth of operations but, owing to the expanding funnel of the Soviet land mass, the breadth of the front line. Consequently, the planning for Operation Barbarossa reveals a muddled process where information was produced to match major decisions already taken, rather than information being gathered upon which to base major decisions.[18]

Among the intelligence reports believed to have been available for the operational studies was a draft copy of the Military Geography Department's soon to be published study of the Soviet Union. This forwarded the standard arguments in favor of the occupation of the Ukraine, Moscow, and Leningrad but went on to suggest that the oil wells of the Caucasus were probably too distant to be included in the German sphere of control. Importantly, the report concluded, even if such far flung regions could be directly administered, it would still not ensure a cessation of Soviet resistance

owing to the substantial development of Asian Russia. Moreover, this region was no longer a backwater of sparsely populated indigenous peoples living as nomads or in isolated settlements. On the contrary, the report presented an impressive picture of modern development. Beyond the Urals and Caspian Sea lived 40 million people with developed agricultural and industrial resources, and the western section had an increasing network of railroad communications. The report concluded that the principal enemies in any attack were space and climate with the vastness of territory being of the utmost importance.[19]

The German military attaché in Moscow, Lieutenant-General Ernst Köstring, the foremost German military expert on the Soviet Union, fluent in Russian and stationed in the Soviet capital since 1935, was another undoubted source of authoritative information. Although he did contribute to the intelligence-gathering process, his voice, unlike head of the army's intelligence-gathering Department of Foreign Armies East Lieutenant-Colonel Eberhard Kinzel, was distinctly critical. He believed there was nothing to gain in a proposed war that could not be secured politically, so long as the German Wehrmacht remained strong and undefeated.[20] Militarily, Köstring wrote in August 1938, the Red Army, even amidst the worst of Stalin's "Great Purge," retained a formidable fighting capacity.

> The Red Army, as a result of the liquidation of large numbers of senior officers, who applied themselves to their task very ably for ten years, advancing theoretical and practical training, has now lost a degree of its operational level ability. . . . The best commanders are now gone, yet there is *no* indication or proof that the strike power of the *majority* has sunken so low as to no longer constitute a significant factor in the event of a war.[21]

In October 1940, Köstring again emphasized caution in an intelligence report prepared for Foreign Armies East. Here he stressed the defensive qualities of the Red Army, which reinforced the impression of a formidable opponent and highlighted the difficulties of movement in the east. He drew attention to the absence of roads and extremes in weather, which he concluded were the Soviet Union's greatest allies, along with time and space.[22]

The mismatch between theoretical planning and operational reality for an Eastern campaign was not an isolated problem but, rather, proved systematic of a wider cultural and intellectual issue that pervaded many levels of the Wehrmacht's organization, including its armaments program. The large expansion in the number of divisions forced such considerable production demands that they could not be met without everything being subordinated to the army.[23] The result was a prioritization of equipment with the army favoring its much-needed Mark III and Mark IV tanks in addition to the new 50mm anti-tank gun. Yet, even in this narrow selection, estimates for production capacity differed greatly from actual output, indicating that an immense effort needed to be made to lift production. In July 1940, a monthly goal of 380 tanks was envisaged, but by August this figure was revised down to 200. In September 1940, a mere 121 tanks were produced over the course of the month. This, however, did not stop new targets being set on 14 September that aimed for the extraordinary figures of 2,000 Mark III and 800 Mark IV panzers to be delivered by 1 April 1941, requiring a monthly output of 466 tanks starting immediately.[24] The

absurdity of such projections is another plain confirmation of the regime's tendency toward delusional practices.

The expansion of the army also had profound implications on the already serious shortage of motorized transportation within its ranks. Even before the army's expansion to 180 divisions was decided, Hitler wanted to double the number of panzer divisions to 21 as well as raise the number of motorized divisions to 10.[25] Production capacity simply did not exist to achieve this fanciful goal in any realistic time frame, so the divisions were created by simply reducing the strengths of those already in existence – a solution which immediately solved the problem on paper but offered no practical benefit to the army's strength.[26] In managing this process, Colonel-General Fritz Fromm, Chief of the Land-Force Armaments and commander-in-chief of the Replacement Army, informed Halder that the activation of new panzer divisions required so many vehicles that those allotted to the infantry divisions would have to be reduced further.[27] This compounded an already stark problem that would plague German operations in the early weeks of the Barbarossa campaign. Essentially, two separate armies were being formed to invade the Soviet Union, one a highly mobile and motorized force that was prioritized with the best roads and air support, while the other was a lumbering and slow "hoof and foot" force. The tensions created by the two speeds of the army meant they could not function together in rapid operations and therefore were not mutually supporting until the front halted long enough for the infantry to catch up.

The lopsided organization of the *Ostheer* (eastern army) was perhaps best illustrated in November 1940, when Halder met with the Army Quartermaster-General, Major-General Eduard Wagner. Concerned primarily with the issues of supply and logistics, Wagner came to report his findings based on the premise of keeping some 2 million men, 300,000 horses, and 500,000 motor-vehicles supplied. Such an undertaking, he frankly assessed, would allow for an advance of between 700 and 800 kilometers, given projected fuel consumption. In addition, foodstuffs and ammunition supply would suffice for only the first 20 days.[28] Such a troubling appraisal should have evoked considerable concern with plans afoot to march far deeper into the Soviet interior. At the very least a delay in operations of many weeks would be required before the army groups could gather their strength to reach Leningrad, Moscow, and the eastern Ukraine. This was plainly not in line with the rapid victories predicted by the operational studies, to say nothing of reaching the distant Caucasus oil fields or the Volga. Most probably Halder dismissed such a foreboding forecast with his fervent anticipation of the Red Army's swift defeat in the opening border battles, allowing for an unopposed "railway advance" further east. Even more worryingly, Wagner's conclusions were based on significant underestimations of the actual size of the *Ostheer* by June 1941. Instead of 2 million men, the German invasion force would grow to over 3 million men, while the number of horses would more than double to 625,000.[29] However, logistical considerations did not drive decisions in the German army; they were subordinated to operational matters and simply had to make the best of it.

To test the effectiveness of the strategic thinking so far formulated, Lieutenant-General Friedrich Paulus, under instruction from Halder, conducted a detailed war game, but even this was limited to questions of military strategy. Accordingly, it offered no analysis of the logistical difficulties or the harsh conditions of climate and

poor infrastructure prevalent in the East. Even so, Paulus was struck by the regenerative powers of the Red Army as well as their ability to batter the exposed spearheads of the German advance. As a result, Paulus declared in his "general conclusion" (written in 1946) that "the German forces were barely sufficient for the purpose."[30] Given that the war game only attempted to test the first 20 days of operations, in the belief that this constituted the critical period of the war, such a conclusion was sobering. Moreover, Paulus determined that the final line of advance as determined by Lossberg's operational study (Volga to Archangel) was "far beyond anything that the German forces available could hope to achieve."[31] At a minimum, such an outcome should have demanded some form of reassessment of the plans upon which the war against the Soviet Union were based, but that would be to underestimate the extent to which a National Socialist form of military thinking pervaded Hitler's Wehrmacht.[32]

The mixture of optimism and complacency demonstrated by the High Command of the Army (OKH) was perhaps nowhere better seen than in Brauchitsch's description of the coming campaign: "Massive frontier battles to be expected; duration up to four weeks. But in further development only minor resistance is then still to be reckoned with."[33] Likewise, Halder's diary for 5 December 1940, expressed his confidence in the forthcoming campaign by stating, "The Russian is inferior" and then cataloguing inferior Soviet equipment. He portrayed the Soviet air force as antiquated even in comparison with the older German models, their artillery batteries were noted to include a few "modern" designs, but he dismissed the majority as "rebuilt old material." Most importantly, Halder extolled the "clear superiority" of the Mark III German panzer with its 5 cm gun and estimated production of 1,500 units by the spring of 1941. Soviet tanks, Halder concluded, were largely distinctive for their poor armor.[34] It was a view Hitler shared, and his army adjutant, Major Gerhard Engel, noted that both Hitler and Halder shared a "very optimistic" estimation of the Red Army foreseeing "obsolete equipment and above all few aircraft and old tanks."[35]

In fact, Soviet war material, and especially production of the new KV-1 and T-34 tanks, would ensure surprises of the most profound kind awaited the Wehrmacht. The qualitative advantage of these Soviet tanks was enormous. In practical terms it meant that none of the German tanks, regardless of armament, could penetrate the armor on the T-34 at ranges above 500 meters. Indeed, only the later models of the Mark III equipped with 5 cm L/42 main guns could effectively penetrate the armor of the T-34 at less than 500 meters. The KV-1 was simply impervious to all tank-mounted German firepower as well as anti-tank guns issued to infantry divisions. A combined total of some 1,861 of these advanced Soviet tanks would be available by the time of the German invasion and the scope for increased wartime production, even in the event of territorial losses in the west of the country, dwarfed Germany's own tank output.[36]

In contrast to the army, the Luftwaffe was required to perform in almost constant combat, fighting a long and costly campaign over Britain. Figures for the period between May and September 1940, covering both the defeat of France and the Battle of Britain, illustrate the toll these operations took on the Luftwaffe. Taken as a percentage of the early May total, losses for single-engine fighters amounted to 57 percent; twin-engine fighters, 94 percent; bombers, 64 percent; and dive-bombers, 50 percent.[37] Such an erosion of strength was clearly unsustainable in the long-term and boded ill for the further commitment of the Luftwaffe in the campaign over

Britain as well as the expansion of aerial operations into new theatres. The chief of the operations department of the Luftwaffe, Major-General Hoffman von Waldau, reported to Halder in October 1940 that the prospect of the Luftwaffe fighting a two-front war, to include the Soviet Union, was "impossible."[38]

The firepower of the standard German infantry division in both offensive and defensive action rested largely with its artillery regiment. This placed a premium on its ability to be used in as much concentration as possible and be kept well supplied with shells. In any prospective Soviet campaign, the width of the front and the depth of operations counted strongly against the comparatively small number of German guns and was exacerbated by a shortfall in the production of ammunition. The *Ostheer* could muster only 7,146 artillery pieces along its whole front.[39] By comparison, Soviet field armies operated some 32,900 guns and mortars of all calibers over 50mm, while the whole Red Army together possessed the startling figure of 76,500 guns and mortars over 50mm.[40] It is important to add that the Red Army was let down by poor organization, training, and support services, which initially compensated in some measure for the German numerical inferiority.[41] Yet Soviet industrial might and technical proficiency meant Barbarossa had to be a success and result in a short war – the failure to do so would mean Soviet formations could learn, adapt, and improve with profound consequences.

The planning process for Operation Barbarossa crystallized into state policy with War Directive Number 21, issued on 18 December 1940. This outlined the final German plan as well as the associated assumptions about the Red Army and the Soviet Union. Under the sub-heading "General Intention," the German aim was for "daring" armored thrusts to destroy the bulk of the Red Army in the western regions of the country. The success of these early operations would prevent the escape of battle-worthy elements and allow the remaining enemy forces to be "energetically pursued" to the final line of advance along the Volga to Archangel.[42] Not surprisingly, the absence of a rigorous critical review of the earlier operational studies allowed many of their fundamental errors and misconceptions to flow directly into Directive 21. Notably, the assumption that German operations would continue, after the initial encirclements, in the form of a "pursuit," suggests major battles and continued resistance was not to be expected. Finland and Romania were the only two German allies incorporated into the planning process, although other countries, such as Italy, Hungary, and Slovakia, would subsequently join the war after June 22.[43] Finland would pressure the Red Army throughout Karelia, especially with an advance along the shores of Lake Ladoga, while Romania was enlisted to support the German southern flank conducting a major siege at Odessa and providing troops for rear area administration.[44]

On 31 January 1941, Brauchitsch hosted a meeting attended by Halder and the army's top field commanders, Field Marshals Gerd von Rundstedt, Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb, Fedor von Bock, and Erwin von Witzleben. Here it was once again made clear that the army's plan proceeded from the assumption that the Red Army could be engaged and defeated before the Dvina-Dnepr line. Field Marshal Bock, however, asked what would happen if the Red Army did not oblige OKH plans and instead fell back into the depths of the country. He received the curt reply from Halder, "it might well happen otherwise."[45] Disturbing as this must have been for Bock, who was returning from four months of sick leave and receiving his first detailed briefing on the Barbarossa campaign, Halder was not about to have the whole theoretical conception

called into question. As recently as November 1940, Halder confided to his diary that the daunting scope of commitments around Europe suggested a limitation of operations in the east to the first operational objective (i.e., the Dvina-Dnepr line). He believed that "starting from there, one could attempt an enveloping operation, but in the endless expanse of space this would have no prospect of success."[46] Not surprisingly, the prospect of fighting on into the Soviet hinterland boded ill for Halder, but once again he asked none of the difficult questions, trusting instead in the plans at hand. Even if questions were raised by men like Bock, no one seriously questioned the outcome of the campaign.[47] As Colonel-General Heinz Guderian later observed, "All the men of the OKW and the OKH with whom I spoke evinced an unshakable optimism and were quite impervious to criticism or objections."[48]

Until spring 1941 the campaign in the east was presented and explained by Hitler largely in terms of the wider war against Britain and the related advantages for possible future conflict with the United States. Yet as the campaign approached, his interest shifted more and more from strategic and geopolitical considerations to his long-held racial and ideological beliefs. As Hitler had written as early as 1928:

> The size of a people is a variable factor. It will be a rising one in the case of a healthy people. Yes, the increase alone can secure the future of a people. . . . The growth in population could only be compensated by growth – expansion – of the Lebensraum. For Germany, a future alliance with Russia has no sense. . . . On the contrary . . . that would have prevented us from seeking the goal of German foreign policy in the one and only place possible: space in the East.[49]

Finally, at the end of March 1941, Hitler gathered his generals to announce the beginning of what he called "Colonial tasks!" requiring a "Clash of two ideologies" for which the Wehrmacht would have to undertake "a war of extermination." As Hitler told his generals, "We do not wage war to preserve the enemy."[50] Hitler's words signaled a fundamental change in the nature of the war and the approach of the German army in conceptualizing and engaging its enemy.[51] Although atrocities had been perpetrated in Poland and in other occupied countries, Operation Barbarossa embodied a conception of "total war" that removed the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, creating the precondition for unrestrained violence. It was here that conventional war became indistinguishable from genocide in Hitler's conception. As Stephen Fritz has noted: "Barbarossa offered a geo-strategic way out of his dilemma, while blitzkrieg provided the means; but more, conquest of Lebensraum and the final confrontation with the alleged Jewish-Bolshevik enemy represented the apotheosis of his ideology and life's work."[52]

The totality of the coming war was reflected by another of Hitler's instructions, which emphasized that Barbarossa was to be "more than a mere clash of arms. . . . In view of the extent of the space involved, *the striking down of the enemy armed forces will not suffice to bring about an end to the war.*"[53] This alluded to the "colonial tasks" facilitating Hitler's "New Order" in the East. The ruthless ideological dictates of this work and the huge area to be administered demanded the willing complicity of the armed forces which would have to operate both directly and in close contact with Hitler's genocidal policies. Indeed, the cordial relationship between the Wehrmacht and the

other agencies of the regime, such as the SS and SD, belies the myth of a formal separation of responsibility, which many generals later claimed in their defense.[54]

The army high command even took the initiative in issuing a series of criminal orders that reflected Hitler's conception of the war. The two most notorious were the "Decree on the Exercise of Martial Jurisdiction in the Area 'Barbarossa' and Special Measures of the Troops" and the "Guidelines for the Treatment of Political Commissars" issued 13 May and 6 June, respectively. The first order freed German soldiers from any form of prosecution for war crimes committed in the Soviet Union (except for sexual misdeeds with what were judged to be racially inferior Slavs),[55] while at the same time opening the way to collective reprisals to combat "criminal action." The second order targeted Soviet commissars and required that upon capture these men be promptly shot.[56] Importantly, these orders were specifically directed toward the officers of the Wehrmacht who were then required to carry out the executions independently of the SS or SD. Not only was there no active resistance from the generals, but many of them issued orders to their troops independently, explaining the necessity for harsh measures in the east. On 2 May, Colonel-General Erich Hoepner, commander of Panzer Group 4, instructed his men:

> The war against Russia is an important chapter in the struggle for the existence of the German nation. It is the old battle of the Germanic against the Slavic peoples, of the defense of European culture against the Moscovite-Asiatic inundation, and the repulse of Jewish Bolshevism. The objective of this battle must be the destruction of present-day Russia and it must therefore be conducted with unprecedented severity. Every military action must be guided in planning and execution by an iron resolution to exterminate the enemy remorselessly and totally. In particular, no adherents of the contemporary Russian Bolshevik system are to be spared.[57]

Colonel-General Eugen Ritter von Schobert, who commanded the Eleventh Army, not only pledged to kill all captured political officers of the Red Army but also ordered "political commissars of the civil administration to be shot without further ado."[58] Such a blatant extension of the killing process was in no way required by the army guidelines, showing the scope for radicalization from below. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that an intelligence officer in Colonel-General Hermann Hoth of Panzer Group 3 reported at the beginning of August 1941 that the Commissar Order was implemented without "any problem for the troops" and that 170 commissars had already been executed. Similarly, evidence from Guderian's Panzer Group 2 shows that 183 commissars were shot prior to the end of October 1941.[59] The unparalleled research of Felix Römer, who investigated the implementation of the Commissar Order in all the German divisions on the eastern front, confirms just how extensive its application in fact was. Römer found evidence that Soviet political officers were executed in all 13 armies, all 44 army corps, and more than 80 percent of the almost 150 German front-line divisions. Moreover, if one includes cases that are more suggestive than explicit in their mention of carrying out the order, the number of divisions rises to over 90 percent.[60]

Not only were Soviet Commissars condemned, but anyone branded an "enemy" became a target and the killing could extend to whole villages, especially if they were

determined to potentially harbor partisans. In 1941, the Soviet partisan movement may have been in its infancy, but it could nevertheless provoke a harsh response from the German security forces. Hans Becker described a typical German response.

> If a single hostile act against the German army took place in any Russian village the place was immediately branded as partisan and marked down for punishment. Retribution was usually meted out according to a standard procedure. On the very same evening that the "crime" had been committed the village would be surrounded by troops and no one allowed out on any pretext whatever. . . . The village was set on fire and the entire population systematically slaughtered. To the west this process of mass obliteration became notorious from the particular instance of Lidice;[61] but it was a common, almost daily occurrence on the eastern front.[62]

In addition to Hitler's instructions to the army, which led to the criminal orders, in March 1941 Hitler also stated: "The intelligentsia installed by Stalin must be destroyed. The leadership machine of the Russian empire must be defeated. In the Greater Russian area the use of the most brutal force is necessary."[63] This translated into the elimination of all communist functionaries (not just Red Army commissars), Jews in Party and state posts, and "radical elements" defined as saboteurs, assassins, propagandists, and agitators.[64] These tasks were entrusted to *Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich, the Chief of the Reich Security Main Office, who organized mobile killing squads known as *Einsatzgruppen* (action groups).[65] The total strength of the *Einsatzgruppen* came to only about 3,000 men organized into four battalion-sized groups, designated A, B, C, and D.[66] Given the vast size of the operational areas, the individual *Einsatzgruppe* operated in smaller company-sized groups known as *Einsatzkommandos* or *Sonderkommandos*, which fanned out over the newly occupied territories in search of victims.[67] In addition to their mandated targets, the *Einsatzgruppen* were also instructed to incite "self-cleansing efforts" against Jews by the local population, which effectively meant instigating pogroms. Importantly, the wholesale elimination of all Soviet Jews was not German policy prior to the launch of Operation Barbarossa, but this would follow in July and August.[68]

Even when it came to the most murderous expressions of Nazi policy in the East, the Wehrmacht again proved itself to be perfectly compliant. The head of *Einsatzgruppe A*, *Brigadeführer* Dr. Franz Walther Stahlecker, noted in a report: "I am able to say that from the outset cooperation with the Wehrmacht was generally good, and in certain cases, as for example with Panzer Group 4 under the command of General Hoepner, extremely close, one might even say warm."[69] There are even instances of direct participation by members of the Wehrmacht.[70] Casting a deserving moral judgment on the leadership of the army, while retaining his perspective on the political liability, the anti-Nazi conspirator Ulrich von Hassell recorded in his diary:

> [I]t makes one's hair stand on end to learn about and receive proof of orders signed by Halder and distributed to the troops as to measures to be taken in Russia, and about the systematic transformation of military law concerning the conquered population into uncontrolled despotism – indeed a caricature of all law. This kind of thing turns the German into a "Boche;" it

> develops a type of being which had existed only in enemy propaganda. Brauchitsch has sacrificed the honour of the German Army in submitting to these orders of Hitler.[71]

Operation Barbarossa's military operations and the widespread killings that accompanied the German invasion of the Soviet Union proceeded hand in hand from the first days of the conflict.[72] As Christoph Rass has argued, the "differentiation between a conventional war at the front and a war of extermination in the rear cannot be made. . . . Nearly all elements of National Socialist warfare and extermination policies coincided in the world of these soldiers."[73] Indeed, the radicalization of Nazi policy in the East was driven predominately as a response to Germany's fraught military situation, which should not be surprising, given the many misconceptions, oversights, and omissions contained within the planning phase of the campaign. As one German soldier would later write of the eastern front: "Mother Russia opened her arms wide in embrace. Welcome to the war. . . . Welcome to hell on earth."[74]

Notes

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THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR IN THE PACIFIC 1937–1941

Greg Kennedy

The conflict known as the Second World War began not in Europe but in the Pacific. To give a specific date, the 7 July 1937 Japanese attack on China signaled the beginning of the conflict.[1] That invasion aimed to expand Japan's access to natural resources, obtain key strategic positions inland and in the littoral area that would allow control of critical trade and commercial activities, and, finally, eliminate existing Anglo-American regional control over trade conditions. As such, the attack violated a range of international norms which the League of Nations, Treaty of Versailles, the Washington Treaty System, the London Naval Conference system, the Kellogg Pact, and the Open Door Policy had all been aimed at preventing the use of military force in international affairs in the Pacific that would change the international balance of power in a dramatic, dangerous, and destabilizing fashion. The war in China created changes to international perceptions and norms, which controlled thinking about the legitimacy of the use of force in the affairs of Great Powers. The Rule of Law's place in international relations and the willingness of Western powers to challenge rising aggressor, or "outlaw" states, with military force to protect that Rule of Law were challenged directly. Most importantly, however, the war in China acted as a proxy theatre for a clash of ideas and a testing of strategic alignments embroiling all the world's major actors: the United States, Britain, Japan, the Soviet Union, Germany, Italy, France, and of course China, as fascist, militarist, and dictatorial states found themselves opposed by democratic and communist nations.[2]

Tracking the origins of war is an inexact science. The final declaration of a source for the conflict is dependent on the periodization of the war, the length of time considered as being significant for analysis, all tied to the selection of what are determined to be the significant causal factors.[3] In the case of the origins of the war in the Pacific, which is traditionally linked to the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the myriad reasons for Japan choosing to act militarily are to be found in circumstances and actions generated throughout all three levels of war: the strategic, operational, and tactical over an extended period of time, primarily from 1932 to 1941.[4] As well, theoretically, the competing interests of the three main protagonists within the existing international balance of power system (Britain, the United States, and Japan, although the Soviet Union should not be forgotten) provided the two fundamental prerequisites for war to occur between these rational actors:

> One is that the costs of war cannot be overwhelmingly high. . . . There must be some plausible situations in the eyes of the decision makers such that

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> the anticipated gains from a war in terms of resources, power, glory, territory, and so forth exceed the expected costs of conflict, including expected damages to property and life. Thus, for war to occur . . . at least one of the sides involved has to expect that the gains from the conflict will outweigh the costs incurred. . . . Second . . . there has to be a failure in bargaining, so that for some reason there is an inability to reach a mutually advantageous and enforceable agreement.[5]

The Anglo-American strategy of containing and deterring Japanese aggression in China and the Pacific through various means of engagement, disarmament, trade restrictions, embargoes, public condemnation in the court of global public opinion and diplomacy did not, on the other hand, accomplish either of those desired strategic end-states. Instead, increasing levels of the use of maritime power and economic warfare escalated the tensions between the Western nations and Japan. That threat of the potential combination of an overwhelmingly powerful economic position, linked to global maritime dominance, created a strategic reality in which the Japanese use of force had a limited amount of time to be effective before Anglo-American dominance overwhelmed that fleeting Japanese military advantage. The threat of losing that military leverage to the Anglo-American alliance was the key catalyst for Japan's final decision to escalate its use of military power in pursuit of its national security aims to an unacceptable level on 7 December 1941.[6]

Throughout the interwar period, Britain and the United States faced the challenge of an expansionist Japan seeking to destabilize the established balance-of-power system that governed the international order in the Far East. The growth of the perception, and eventual reality, of the Japanese threat to both Western nations' national security interests in the region provoked a number of responses.[7] International arms agreements, naval fortification agreements, declaration of spheres of influences in China, appeasement, coercion, persuasion, appeals to moderation, sanctions, embargoes, proxy war, and economic warfare were all utilized in the quest to arrest Japan's drive to dominate Pacific international affairs.[8] However, until the actual threat of war in Europe initiated rearmament programs for the Western powers, one of the few effective means of deterring Japan's challenge to Anglo-American strategic interests in the Far East was the use of economic and fiscal power.[9] However, the difference between deterrence and escalation is a small one. This chapter will outline some of these areas of tension and their place in the circumstances leading up to the Japanese attack in 1941.

The steady deterioration in Anglo-American–Japanese relations in the period from 1919 to 1937 was created by an array of large and small frictions. Arguably the main catalysts, around which many of the subsequent tensions and fractures revolved, covered several issues. A deep and abiding feeling of bitterness and disillusionment was created within the Japanese policymaking elite following the termination in 1922 of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. This rejection of Japan as an important ally was linked directly to the events of the 1922 Washington Treaty system. This agreement provoked amongst the Japanese nationalists and militarists a strong sense of resentment against the perceived inferior naval ratio for Japan and the creation of interlinked treaties all aimed at limiting Japan's influence in China.[10] This annulment of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty also made clear to Japan's leadership that in matters concerning the balance of power in the Pacific, Britain and the United States were

now the closer aligned powers.[11] The perception of such a joining of the world's two most powerful industrial and economic powers to ordain Asian affairs was a strategic condition that represented a severe limiting factor in any future Japanese aspirations to increase its Great Power status.[12] The world trade depression of 1929–1931, which created a global atmosphere of protectionism that manifested itself in tariffs and quotas in both the United States and Britain aimed at reducing the flow of cheaper Japanese goods into the Western marketplaces and competing neutral markets, added fuel to the fire of the perception of Anglo-American power containing or denying Japan its legitimate global trade and commercial opportunities. These competitive trade frictions alienated banking, industrial, and commercial actors in all three states from one another, degrading the voice of such individuals in higher political and international affairs. The language of competition and zero-sum conditions became the norm where Anglo-American conversations and images of Japanese international commerce were concerned.

The strategic trade tensions created between the three states were exacerbated by the naval arms limitations imposed by the 1930 London Naval Treaty system.[13] An attempt to establish security in the Far East was sought through a naval arms limitation system, beginning with the Washington Conference of 1921–1922. Limiting the build-up of naval power in the region was the aim of subsequent naval disarmament conferences. This arms limitation mechanism, it was hoped, would prevent a naval arms race and thus rival navalist tensions kept to a minimum. The mechanism employed was the negotiation of a ratio system governing the construction of key types of vessels, particularly battleships and heavy and light cruisers, all tied to a total tonnage allowance. Within this allowance, Great Britain and the United States were allowed to build navies of the same size, while Japan was limited to one slightly larger than half the size of either of the Western powers, a formula known as the 5:5:3 ratio. By the time a scheduled second conference within the Treaty was held in 1935, Japanese navalism, nationalism, and adventurism in Manchuria had driven Anglo-American strategic considerations for the conference closer together and, at the same time, made it almost impossible for the Japanese government to continue to support the terms of the original agreement.[14] As a result, Japan left the London Naval Treaty system in 1936, reinforcing the Anglo-American perception of it being a state that could not be dealt with diplomatically and only respected military power.

The Japanese withdrawal from the London Naval Agreement was followed up in November 1936 by Japan joining Nazi Germany (and eventually Fascist Italy) in an Anti-Comintern Pact aimed ostensibly at combating the Soviet Union. Many within the British and American strategic policy-making elites saw the linkage as more of a natural ideologically driven military and political alliance aimed at anyone who challenged the three militaristic states, including the Western democracies.[15] Finally, the growing determination of Japan to dislodge Anglo-American interests from China to recoup for itself trade losses in the British Empire and South America were superimposed on a number of minor disputes and incidents, the net result being the production of a constant state of strategic friction between the two Western powers and Japan.[16] The overall effect was a growth in both the open and the less visible informal areas of strategic cooperation and coordination between Britain and the United States, accompanied by a corresponding weakening of many of the ties of friendship or accommodation between those two nations and Japan.[17]

By the summer of 1939, in that atmosphere of strained Anglo-American relations with Japan, events outside of that triangular relationship had a significant role in creating strategic perceptions that would lead to a decision for open warfare in the Pacific. The Allied failure to defend Norway, followed by the German invasion of the Low Countries in May 1940 and the rapid fall of France, created a strong groundswell of anti-British sentiment in Japan. Seen as weak, over-stretched, and militarily incompetent, Britain's ability to use military power to deter or coerce Japan was severely weakened. This weakness meant that after the spring of 1940, Britain's security in the Far East was underpinned by the United States and its Pacific Fleet.[18] Within Japan itself, jingoistic elements of the press began to call for Japan to assert its rights in China and elsewhere to an even greater degree, actions that would require the expulsion of the Anglo-American naval powers and their influence from the region. German victories in Europe generated a swell of nationalism in Japan that saw the more accommodating Yonai government swept from office, ending the period of Japanese "non-involvement." From that point on, Japan's attitude toward the Axis was that it would provide all possible assistance short of war.[19] One of the first challenges to the Anglo-American alliance from this more openly confrontational Japan was the issue of the Burma Road.

The Burma Road was a landline of communication from Burma to China created to offset the loss of sea-lines of communication that the Western nations required to sustain the Chinese leader Chiang Kai-shek's resistance to Japan.[20] China was considered a strategic quagmire, draining Japan of valuable money, manpower, and political will. This quagmire was the main source of protection for British and American interests in the rest of the Far East due to the fact that so long as Japan was mired in the Chinese debacle, the longer Anglo-American possessions in the region were less likely to be threatened by Japan any time soon.[21] An agreement for a three-month closure of the Road had been negotiated between Britain and the Yonai Cabinet just weeks before that government's fall from office. The Japanese government had for some time demanded the Road's closure on the ground that it was only because of supplies reaching China over this route that Chinese resistance could continue. Faced with military reverses in Europe and growing Japanese extremists calling for war with Britain, the British government agreed to a closure from mid-July to mid-October. That period coincided with the rainy season in Burma, a condition that reduced the Road's traffic volume to one-tenth its normal traffic rate.[22] When the British decision to reopen the Burma Road in mid-October was made, many in London and Washington feared the result would be a Japanese military response, plunging Britain, and perhaps America, into a war with Japan. As the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill told the American President Franklin D. Roosevelt:

> I shall say that our hopes a just settlement being reached between Japan and China have not borne fruit and that the Three-Power-Pact revives the Anti-Comintern Pact of 1939 and that it has a clear pointer against the United States. I know how difficult it is for you to say anything which would commit the United States to any hypothetical course of action in the Pacific. But I venture to ask whether at this time a simple action might not speak louder than words. Would it not be possible for you to send an American squadron, the bigger the better, to pay a friendly visit to Singapore. There

> they would be welcomed in a perfectly normal and rightful way. If desired occasion might be taken of such a visit for a technical discussion of Naval and Military problems in those and Philippine waters and the Dutch might be invited to join. Anything in this direction would have a marked deterrent effect upon a Japanese declaration of war upon us over the Burma Road opening. I should be very grateful if you would consider action along these lines as it might play an important part in preventing the spreading of the war.[23]

Despite such fears, the Japanese military did nothing in response to the reopening of the Road. Firmly established by that time in northern Indochina, the Japanese Army believed that they could destroy the bridges over the Mekong River by aerial attack from their airbases in Tongking, thus interdicting the Burma Road. The discovery that such actions would not stop the traffic over the route, and that Britain and the United States were no longer willing to negotiate the suspension of aid to Chiang Kai-shek over the Road, was seen by some as a factor that must have influenced the Japanese decision to go to war.[24] Along with the China issue being a major contributor to the Japanese decision to go to war in December 1941, the Soviet Union's influence on the balance of power in the Pacific was also a significant factor.

The Soviet Union was arguably Imperial Japan's greatest threat. The Soviet Eastern Army was a major obstacle to Japan's Manchurian interests and a source of constant friction and concern for the Japanese Army. As well, the Soviet Air Force based in Vladivostok posed a potential danger aimed at the heart of Japanese wood and paper cities. The fear of mass Soviet air raids reducing Japan's major urban centers into raging infernos was a serious issue for Japan defense planners throughout the 1930s.[25] In 1935, Anglo-American observers feared an outbreak of war between the Soviet Union and Japan over control of the Chinese Eastern Railway.[26] Anglo-American strategic attempts to coerce Japan into better behavior in the region relied heavily on leveraging Japan's fear of the Soviet Union against it to maintain the balance of power in the Far East and keep Japanese expansionism in check.[27] The Soviet Union's presence in Manchuria and its status as a powerful military actor on the mainland gave it the same strategic worth as China: to play the role of strategic quagmire for Japanese military effort. As long as both China and the Soviet Union were strategic threats to Japan, the latter would spend valuable military resources, political capital, international goodwill and fiscal power preparing to meet those challenges instead of using such valuable strategic resources building a bigger navy or preparing the diplomatic and political groundwork for a Southern Advance.[28]

In 1939, Japan's fears of the Soviet Union's military prowess in the Far East were increased after the Japanese military suffered two significant losses at the hands of the Soviet Army. In the border skirmishes known as the battles of Kalkhin Gol and Nomohan, from May to September 1939, ending with the destruction of the Japanese Sixth Army, Soviet combined arms proved superior to the Japanese land and air forces. This embarrassing defeat, coupled with the Soviet Union's support for China's war effort, created substantial concern on the part of the Japanese military and civilian leadership as to how successful their mainland military adventurism was likely to be.[29] At that point, the Imperial Japanese Navy assumed a greater voice in overall Japanese strategic matters, as the idea of a Southern Advance (the seizure of Dutch,

French, British, and American possessions requiring naval power to play the decisive role in the campaign) began to gain more favor as the "easier" option for gaining critical strategic raw materials and territorial expansion.[30]

Once again, circumstances from the European war had a direct effect on the attitude of actors in the balance of power systems struggling to maintain peaceful conditions in the Far East. The German government, aware of Japan's support for its European war, had made significant overtures to the Pacific Power to forge closer military and diplomatic links. By 27 September 1940, a Tripartite Pact had been agreed upon between Germany, Italy, and Japan.[31] The most important article of the agreement, Article 3, stipulated that in the event of any Power not already involved in war deciding subsequently to attack either Germany, Italy, or Japan, the other two powers would immediately give the attacked power all the assistance available to them.[32] Furthermore, the Pact established close contact between the Japanese and Axis General Staffs though the provision, establishing mixed technical commissions to reside permanently in the three capitals. The Japanese military mission in Berlin, established very quickly after the signing of the Pact, was led by Lieutenant-General Tomoyuki Yamashita, the Inspector-General of Army Aviation (subsequently the officer in charge of the Japanese campaign in the Malayan Peninsula). A naval mission was also sent to Berlin, while German aviation experts and test pilots arrived in Japan to help with the expansion of the Japanese aviation industry.[33] While designed to impress and perhaps even restrain the United States in its growing impatience with Japan, the Tripartite Pact proved more a confirmation of Japan's rogue state status and aided in helping push it even further into the category of hostile aggressor to Anglo-American global strategic interests.[34]

This move away from any physical confrontation with the Soviet Union in mainland Asia and a greater reliance on the Imperial Japanese Navy to fulfil any expansionist campaign was given its final necessary condition with the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941.[35] Operation Barbarossa brought great relief to the Japanese Army and other Japanese strategic policymakers, as the nation's primary military opponent was now locked in a war for survival on the other side of the world. With China in a state of relative stability, as far as Japanese military control was concerned, France knocked out of the Far East and its Indo-China possessions now under Japanese control, and Britain struggling for its very existence, the opportunity to strike south was too great a strategic opportunity to miss. With the Soviet Union now focused on its Western Front, Japanese planning saw the opportunity to move against Anglo-American naval power, the only serious military threat remaining that poised any danger to their expansionist plans. German victories against the Soviet Union had allowed the Japanese to plan for their attack on Pearl Harbor with a greater sense of confidence in the ability of the use of military and naval force to achieve their desired imperial ambitions. Now, if negotiations failed to deliver those desired objectives, Japan could rest assured of the utility of its short-term military power to do so.

However, naval power and diplomacy were not the only areas of friction in terms of the use of power within the contest being waged to change the balance of power between Japan and the Anglo-American powers. Without significant naval and military power in the region to support any diplomatic efforts, the Anglo-American approach to deterring Japanese aggression and expansion after 1937 had to achieve that aim by methods short of war. Both Western nations had no desire to provoke

Japan's ire through deterrent activities, especially as the situation in Europe deteriorated and with war eventually breaking out. Economic warfare became the only strategic option left to the world's greatest capitalist, industrialist, and trading states. How far this economic warfare strategy could be utilized, especially in light of the inability of either the United States or Britain to support sanctions, embargoes, and asset freezes with credible naval force that could either protect their Far Eastern interests from direct, physical Japanese reprisals, or carry out the necessary patrols, blockades, and enforcement activities required to make such policies credible (and legal) was a serious concern. An even more pressing question remained: would such actions create the desired deterrent effect, or would they lead to an escalation and violent rupture of the situation?[36]

One of the earliest aspects of this Anglo-American economic warfare against Japan was the negotiation and agreement of the 1938 Anglo-American Trade Agreement.[37] The product of the strategically able Sir Ronald Lindsay, the British Ambassador to the United States from 1932 until 1939, the process of negotiating the Agreement, and the actual terms of the Trade Agreement itself, fulfilled two important functions for the Anglo-American strategic relationship in the Far East. In the first instance, it allowed the development of a deeper and more integrated sharing of each nation's appreciations of Japan as a potential threat and disruptor to the balance of power in that region, thereby building not only a deeper understanding but also trust between the strategic cultures of the two Western states.[38] Secondly, the use of the Trade Agreement as a direct strike against Japanese trade and commercial expansionism, both necessary developments if that industrially weak island state was to be able to compete militarily and economically in any major future conflict, signaled a willingness on the part of Britain and the United States to engage in a coordinated deterrence strategy.[39]

Lindsay's strategic acumen and understanding of the Anglo-American strategic partnership recognized that both nations' centers of gravity revolved around national security concerns regarding controlling global capitalism (economics, finance, and trade) and the desire for a balance of power approach to their engagement with international relations issues, all of which rested upon an absolute need to possess decisive global maritime power. Lindsay's understanding of the connectivity and commonality of these centers of gravity was pivotal for his ability to diplomatically forge an informal alliance constructed of steel and gold, where, prior to his appointment to Washington, worries existed that any Anglo-American alliance would be built upon a foundation of sand and rhetoric.[40] The overall true impact of the 1938 Anglo-American Trade Agreement was, therefore, the beginning of the creation of an Anglo-American system of economic warfare aimed specifically at deterring Japan in her quest to dominate the Far Eastern region:

> especial care is being taken in a large number of cases where competition from Japan exists or is probable to make sure that Japan shall not benefit by the tariff concessions granted by the United States of America and by the United Kingdom (including the Colonies) respectively. . . . When therefore the trade agreement is eventually published it will be found that a good deal of covert action has been taken against Japanese goods, and the Japanese will be able to draw what moral they like from this. They are no doubt

> watching carefully, and it remains to be seen whether they will follow up the intimations of their concern which they made to Mr. Hull some months ago by formal protest when the effects of our trade agreement with the United States of America become apparent.[41]

This first step in the creation of deterrence through economic warfare gathered pace quickly in the wake of the Japanese invasion of China. Loans and financial support to sustain China's resistance was the next stage of the Anglo-American efforts to drain Japan's economic fighting power, thereby creating the conditions for deterrence to be achieved.[42]

From August until December 1938, London and Washington exchanged views as to the appropriateness, size, and presentation of any substantial loan to China. Questions arose over whether or not such a loan should be a joint affair in terms of the timing of the announcement of any such loan, thereby reinforcing the image of a unified Anglo-American bloc at work against Japan, or whether the revealing of any loan arrangements be separate and discreet occurrences.[43] By October 1939, the United States had given China substantial help through the mechanism of buying silver at a rate favorable to the Chinese government and guaranteeing export credits to the amount of US$25 million. Those credits were fully secured on the proceeds of the sale of wood oil, however, and therefore could not be classified as a gift by the Japanese.[44] At the same time, the British government had contributed a currency stabilization loan of £5 million to China to help it avoid a complete collapse of its currency, a situation that would have crippled the Chinese ability to continue the fight against Japan. As well, if the Chinese currency had been allowed to collapse, there was a grave risk that Japanese currency forms would have become dominant in regions controlled by the Chinese Nationalist government, thereby ceding control of those regions to Japan without the need for military conquest.[45] Along with the £5 million currency stabilization loan, His Majesty's Government granted the Chinese government a further £3 million in political credits for the purchase of materials from the British Empire. These credits were, for all intents and purposes, a gift to the Chinese government, as they were not covered by any practical securities. As well, these credits had been arranged with the knowledge of the US government but had not been mentioned publicly. Given Britain's own war needs, a question regarding how much war material such credits could purchase in a timely fashion was reasonable to ask. However, the Anglo-American intent was clearly that of supporting the Chinese war effort in an attempt to thwart Japan's desires to subdue Chinese resistance quickly and with minimal economic and fiscal expenditure.[46] A long war was a quagmire for the Japanese in terms of political, economic, and fiscal power, a fact not lost on the Anglo-American strategic policymakers.

Further economic aid to China, however, would soon be required. In November 1940, after months of Anglo-American discussions and Chinese requests for assistance, Washington and London announced further currency credits for China. The United States pledged US$50 million as a stabilization arrangement with the Central Bank of China, while Britain announced a £10 million grant for stabilization and war purchases purposes.[47] This stabilization funding was followed up in March 1941 by President Roosevelt's decision to add China to the list of those nations eligible for lend-lease support from the United States.[48] Both Britain and the United States

sent financial missions to China in 1941 to ascertain the true condition of the Chinese economy and its need for further infusions of monies. President Roosevelt sent his financial adviser, Lauchlin Currie, who was followed afterward by the Bank of England's senior official, Sir Otto Niemeyer. While both reported that the Chinese economic and fiscal condition was fragile and not able to sustain itself as a credible future deterrent against Japanese actions without larger amounts of financial aid and credits, plans for a new series of financial aid injections were superseded by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor.[49] Therefore, the continued economic and financial support shown by both the United States and Great Britain to the Chinese war effort must be seen as an escalatory factor in their relationship with Japan. Faced with a continued program of material and financial aid to China, Japan was pressured into having to find another method of extracting itself from the Chinese quagmire. Added to this systematic and coordinated financial support element of economic warfare was a corresponding number of economic attacks on Japanese industrial war-making capability.

In September 1940, with the American presidential election in full swing, Japan invaded French Indochina.[50] The invasion generated a swift and immediate action from the United States as it moved to embargo scrap metal destined for Japan.[51] Although Japan withdrew from Indochina by the end of 1940, it returned, with the agreement of the French Vichy government, to acquire key military staging areas as part of its Southern Advance strategy in the summer of 1941. This action on the part of the Japanese government initiated a much higher level of exploration and coordination between Britain and the United States of possible methods of economic warfare to use against Japan.[52] The seizure of Indochina allowed Japanese air and naval units to threaten the major British naval base in Singapore, as well as possibly interdict American sea-lines of communication to the Philippines and China.

Emboldened by the German attack on the Soviet Union and stung by the failure of negotiations with the government of the Dutch Netherlands East Indies for guaranteed access to that vital source of oil, the Konoye Cabinet elected to re-establish its authority in the region with the seizure of Indochina instead.[53] The blatant disregard for the balance of power in the region, as well as the belief that such an act violated earlier Japanese promises to not take advantage of the situation created by the war in Europe to further its own imperial interests, set the Asian power on a direct collision course with Britain and the United States:

> Whatever may have been the motives inspiring the puppet regime of the Vichy Government [to so easily concede to the Japanese demands for control of the colony], for the Japanese Government this move was nothing less than a deliberate attempt to modify the whole strategic position in South East Asia to the disadvantage of Britain, Australia, the United States and the Netherlands East Indies, and this despite repeated warning.[54]

This time, the American and British responses went further than just scrap metal, now including embargoes on critical oil and other strategic raw materials vital to Japan's industrial well-being.[55] Anglo-American actions against Japan, as well as advanced planning between the two nations in Washington to prepare the administrative machinery necessary for imposing a blockade on Japan, were well underway by

May 1941.[56] Coordinated plans for denying Japan access to critical raw materials, such as Brazilian rubber, by purchasing all existing stocks, as well as denying Japan access to other South American markets, were all creating effects visible to the Japanese strategic policymakers as to their future ability to feed the industrial machinery necessary for modern technological warfare.[57] By July 1941, given the effectiveness of the Anglo-American blockade, the objective became not just to limit Japan's acquisition of further critical industrial raw materials but, indeed, to force it to begin to draw on its limit reserves in key areas:

> After the Presidential election, the United States became more ready to cooperate. By now, they have subjected the majority of important commodities to export licence and in practice when they place a commodity on the licensing list they normally refuse all licences to Japan. Their practice is, therefore, more drastic than ours, though certain important commodities such as cotton and mineral oils (with the exception of aviation spirit and lubricants) are subject to no restriction at all. They have also extended their licensing system to goods transhipped in the United States, which seriously affects Japanese imports from Latin America. Finally, they have recently extended it to cover the Philippines, which had become a large supplier to Japan of such commodities as copra, iron ore, chrome, etc. and it is expected that there will be severe restrictions on most of these exports.[58]

The final act of economic warfare, which would push the Japanese to their fateful decision to prefer war over an unlivable peace, was the Anglo-American freezing of Japanese assets.

Although America appeared on the surface to lead the charge on the total freezing of Japanese assets, that action was the result of close and careful discussion and collaboration with both Britain and the Dutch Netherlands East Indies.[59] In mid-July 1941, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden, told the British War Cabinet the strategic situation regarding British support for the American suggestion of a total freezing revolved around three key considerations. Those were: (1) on no account could the British government discourage American action against Japan, and it was vital that Britain match those American measures with actions of their own; (2) while it was considered desirable to try and put off confronting Japan until the moment when the Asiatic power became embroiled with the Soviet Union, such a condition was unlikely to occur any time soon; as such, it was far more important to stay in step with the United States over the seizure and militarization of the Indo-China issue; and (3) American willingness to use force in support of British and Dutch Far Eastern possessions in the face of a Japanese military response needed to be ascertained.[60] The three Western powers had presented a unified front for the first time, putting into place what was in reality a comprehensive embargo on Japan by the end of September 1941. This action was the pinnacle of economic warfare:

> the complete freezing of Japanese assets forced Japan in the course of a very few months to decide between an understanding with the United States and war. . . . So long as economic pressure was regulated and held short of a complete embargo, there was always a margin for manoeuvre by either

> side without a fundamental change of front. When maximum pressure was applied this margin disappeared for both sides. Not only was Japan obliged to make her choice: but the United States, the Netherlands and the British Empire nailed their colours to the mast and could not lower them even an inch without tearing them.[61]

Faced with the choice of accepting a negotiated peace and possibly losing not only popular support at home but a significant amount of prestige and authority in the international arena, Japan's strategic policymaking elite had few options left by the summer of 1941. The war in China would be considered a defeat if any negotiated peace meant surrendering occupied parts there. Questions regarding the Japanese continued presence in Indochina, to say nothing of having little control over its ability to access critical trading markets and strategic raw materials, were untenable outcomes. Japan was faced with a strategic choice by the summer of 1941. It could either continue to negotiate its place in the Far Eastern balance of power but all the while watch its economic, fiscal, and military power erode significantly, while in comparison Anglo-American power across the spectrum continued to increase now that those two nations were mobilizing for total war,[62] or it could attempt to create new conditions that would make a different peace, within the context of which a negotiated settlement acceptable to Japan's strategic needs could be achieved. The catalyst, however, for that different peace would have to be the use of military force to achieve different political ends: in other words, war. Japan's actions and choices in the conduct of its international affairs, and strategic policymaking, had caused the creation of an informal and effective Anglo-American strategic alliance. That alliance had implemented an effective twin-tracked deterrence strategy, based on the prosecution of a proxy war (the China quagmire) and economic warfare, which had combined to force Japan to make a critical choice: war or an Anglo-American peace. Support to China, economic warfare, the use of military power, and a deep reserve of strategic raw materials, money, and industrial power all made a waiting game an attritional victory for the United States and Britain. Faced with the unhappy reality that it had little room left for negotiation or bargaining from a position of military superiority, Japan decided to use that singular power element and to make formal what had until then been an informal condition of tension and friction: open war in the Pacific.

Tracing the myriad interactions involved in creating the conditions for war to be considered, ultimately, as the only rational solution to the impasse within the balance of power condition which existed in the autumn of 1941, is a complex global exercise. With factors stretching back to the end of the First World War; with changes to the European balance of power influencing the Far Eastern balance; with a plethora of strategic power elements, from military to economic, prestige, racism, and questions of international law at play – finding one singular "cause" for this war is not just impossible, it is illogical.[63] Understanding the complexity of war is critical for societies and states so that simplistic, jingoistic, nationalistic, or cults of personality narratives are not allowed to obscure the truth. The truth is that conflict, tension, friction, and dispute were already part of the peace that existed before the transition to war. This critical point – what is the difference between a state in war and a state in peace – is a lesson worth considering when looking to history for such answers as to the origins or causes of war being lessons appropriate for our own time.

Notes

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PART 2

PERSPECTIVES

Tradition and change

4

NATIONALISM, IDENTITY, AND RACE IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Alex Alvarez

Explaining the rise of Nazism in Germany and the ensuing cataclysms of the Second World War and the Holocaust requires one to confront the critical role played by a particular strain of German nationalism that profoundly influenced and shaped many of the attitudes, actions, and policies of the Nazis and their supporters. While we cannot ignore or minimize events such as the German defeat in the First World War, the resentments bred by the subsequent Treaty of Versailles, the fears of Bolshevism and revolutionary violence, or the hardships and anxiety produced by post-war shortages, hyperinflation, and the Great Depression, we must also acknowledge and understand the influence of a number of ideological belief systems prevalent in Europe generally, and Germany specifically, that largely shaped how those historic events were experienced, perceived, and interpreted. Simply put, the Nazis were part of a larger wave of radical nationalist movements that swept across much of Europe in the wake of World War I. From Italy's fascists to Romania's Iron Guard, Hungary's Arrow Cross, Austria's Heimwehr, Spain's Falange, and, of course, Germany's Nazis,[1] many European nations experienced the development of this new form of political and social organization.[2]

While scholars struggle to define fascism precisely and debate its exact nature or the comparability of fascist movements across nations,[3] in general it can be said that they usually expounded radical authoritarian or totalitarian nationalistic agendas that were invariably anti-communist, anti-liberal, anti-modern, and antisemitic.[4] Even though there were localized variations to fascist movements, they were all united by their hatred and resistance to the cultural and political changes experienced by their respective nations, their reliance on and willingness to exploit various forms of bigotry and intolerance, and their embrace of violence as a tool to combat those changes. In many ways, they represented not only a response to the chaos of the times and the social, political, and cultural alienation experienced by many but also a reaction to the threat posed by Bolshevism with its internationalist and egalitarian agenda.[5] Fascism can best be understood as representing the violent struggle to preserve or reclaim a particular version of national identity that was viewed as threatened by the social, cultural, and political transformations taking place. National Socialism, the German version of such fascist totalitarianism, was largely about rejecting the forces of change in German society through the pursuit of a particular kind of national identity.

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Fascism was also fundamentally grounded in a philosophy and practice of aggression that embraced and glorified violent struggle and conflict. In 1919, when Benito Mussolini named his nascent movement the *Fasci italiani di Combattimento*, or Italian Fasci of Combat, and ushered in the era of fascism, he was consciously invoking notions of force, violence, and unity.[6] This basis in violent action was not just rooted in the membership of veterans, a common feature of many fascist movements, but was also a consequence of the perceived utility of violence as a vehicle through which feelings of individual and national shame, humiliation, and frustration could be wiped away and replaced with a sense of pride and respect. Violence, in other words, was understood and employed as a transformational and constructive force of rebirth, rather than as a simple tool of destruction. Scholars of violence have long argued that violent action, both individual and collective, most commonly represent attempts to achieve justice by erasing shame and humiliation.[7] It is no accident that much of the attention of the Nazis, for example, was focused on eradicating the "shame of Versailles," to which the terms imposed upon Germany by the victors at the end of the First World War were referred.

In the modern age, national identity has been one of the most powerful means of defining who we are, both individually and collectively. Yet for all its centrality to the contemporary sense of self, community, and belonging, it is a relatively recent development that originated with the onset of the system of nation-states in the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries.[8] With the emergence of this particular form of political organization, it became clear that a new mechanism was needed to foster a different sense of loyalty and group affiliation than what had preceded it. Previously, identity, affiliation, and loyalty were largely local creations crafted around blood ties to family, clan, fellow villagers, and local lords and rulers.[9] As political entities were increasingly consolidated along national lines, however, commitment to something larger and more dispersed was required, modern states being bigger and more geographically dispersed than earlier political and social structures. This led to the development of nationalism; the idea that a person's loyalty and sense of self is tied to a particular national community in which millions of strangers feel a powerful bond with each other because of a belief that they share common heritage, culture, traditions, values, and future.

In many ways, however, it is an invented or mythic connection – what the political scientist Benedict Anderson famously referred to as an "imagined community."[10] Over time, this "imagined" sense of union became one of the most important tools of identity formation in the modern world. Germany was certainly no exception to this, although a single national identity developed rather late in the German-speaking world compared to many other European countries, only being united into a single sovereign entity in 1871.[11] Prior to unification, the various political entities that would comprise the new nation had shared a common linguistic heritage and cultural characteristics but were also divided by important religious, political, and social differences. Despite these distinctions, however, a common national identity was forged in the early modern era due to several national and international forces and circumstances. Ironically, the nationalism that took hold in Germany was originally infused with many liberal and progressive values.[12] While there were certainly reactionary, intolerant, and racist elements to early German nationalism, it nevertheless encompassed a broad sense of community and belonging. German Jews during

this era enjoyed legal emancipation and equality as well as wide-ranging economic and social opportunities and mobility. Consequently, Jewish life in Germany flourished in this era. Even though Jews still faced discrimination and prejudice, especially in some professional arenas and communities, it was, overall, a time of great social, political, and economic advancement for German Jews.[13] This inclusive variant of German nationalism, however, was to be fundamentally reconstructed in the years after the First World War, and a primary engine of that change was Nazism.

The Nazi movement was founded during a time of tremendous societal, political, and cultural upheaval that followed the end of the First World War. The crucible of that conflict – the first truly modern industrial and technological war – had proved a cataclysmic disruption to the preexisting structures of European life. With the violent destruction of the old prewar order and the resulting loss of faith in traditional institutions, parties, and leadership, a variety of far-right radical nationalist movements arose in many European nations in the disorder and power vacuum posed by those chaotic postwar years. Coupled with the disillusionment of the old established order was a pervasive sense of unease and anxiety provoked by a rapidly changing world in which technology, industry, art, and culture were morphing into new and often unrecognizable forms. Such societal change is always difficult and frequently provokes anxiety among those who feel that their traditions, values, identity, and beliefs are being threatened or lost. This was the context that sparked the creation of fascism. Nowhere was this truer than in Germany, a nation reeling from the devastating loss of the war, the millions of casualties suffered in four bloody years of fighting – much of it on two fronts – and the hardships imposed by the demands of the war effort and the economic blockade that, in combination, resulted in widespread food and fuel shortages, both in the trenches as well as the home front.[14] German national identity and pride had taken a beating.

For many Germans, losing the war came as a shock and significant national trauma. After years of suffering, sacrifice, and struggle, the nation had lost. Given that the heavily censored press had carried only reports of German victories, many ordinary Germans were stunned by the collapse of the war effort, the abdication of the Kaiser, and the subsequent armistice. Amplifying the sense of disbelief and resentment, the Treaty of Versailles signed at the end of June 1919 imposed significant reparation payments, severely limited the size of Germany's armed forces and equipment, stripped significant amounts of territory, and, most infuriating of all, required Germany to accept sole responsibility for the war.[15] To patriotic Germans and nationalists, this last clause was a humiliating slap in the face with the postwar Weimar government receiving most of the blame for having accepted these terms.[16] Since the German military was still in the trenches at the end of the war in November 1918, it had been widely assumed that the terms of the peace agreement would be relatively mild and reasonable.[17] In all fairness, the terms of the treaty – though not without comparative precedent – were perceived as especially punitive in Germany.[18] Never mind that Germany had imposed similar territorial concessions and reparations in 1871 after the Franco-Prussian War.[19] Germany had also imposed severe terms on the new Bolshevik government at the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918.[20] Such recent history, however, did not mitigate the sense of outrage felt by Germans at the terms imposed by the Allied powers. The conditions of the treaty were seen as a constant source of shame and national humiliation, sentiments that were to be skillfully exploited by the Nazis

in the coming years. Theodor Heuss, who would become the first president of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, suggested that "The cradle of the National Socialist movement was Versailles and not Munich."[21]

In addition to the material hardships imposed by the war and the psychological blow to German pride caused by the Treaty of Versailles, the years after the conflict were also a time of widespread social and political unrest.[22] The end of the war did not bring peace, it merely changed the nature of the fighting and moved it onto German soil. Demobilized soldiers returning home and struggling to adapt and reintegrate into their communities and the civilian labor force found a nation in upheaval with widespread food, fuel, employment, and housing shortages. Many cities and communities were wracked with political violence as German communists staged revolutions in places such as Bremen, Munich, and Berlin. The Soviet style republics they established were typically only overthrown after destructive and bloody street fighting and the summary execution of captured enemies.[23] "Normality," as one historian pointed out, "had become a permanent casualty of the war."[24]

It was in this hothouse of radical politics and political violence that the Nazi movement was born in the Bavarian city of Munich. The German Workers Party (*Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, DAP) was one of many radical political parties that flourished in Germany after the war, and Munich, a bastion of conservative German nationalism and antisemitism, was particularly prone to such groups. Growing out of the right-wing nationalist Pan-Germanic League and the antisemitic Thule Society, the DAP was founded on 5 January 1919, and it was not long before Adolf Hitler joined in September of that year. He quickly rose to prominence within the nascent organization, due in large part to his speaking abilities. Evidently, after hearing Hitler talk, the leader of the DAP was supposed to have remarked, "That one's got quite the mouth on him! We could use that!"[25] Soon renamed the National Socialist German Workers Party (*Nationalsozialistiche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP, or Nazi for short), Hitler rapidly built what had been little more than a small group of nationalist *stammtisch* ("head table") malcontents into a regional, then national, political movement.

In some ways, the message of the Nazis was simple; they knew who to blame for Germany's current predicament and pledged to restore German national power and pride. These twin arguments provided a focal point for people's anger, frustration, and fear on the one hand, and on the other offered a sense of hope and optimism. Under Nazi rule, they promised, Germany would reassert its rightful place as a world leader and its enemies would be punished. Such a message appealed to many within the country who felt that all they had fought and suffered for were under threat. One veteran put it this way:

> The sad pictures of red rule we saw while marching back deeply depressed us frontline soldiers. We just could not and would not understand that this was the upshot of four-and-a-half years of our struggle. . . . The homeland had become so alien and un-German to me and I felt a longing and desire for a new order which, on the basis of the Fronterlebnis ["front-line experience"], would resurrect the tormented fatherland in better and wonderful ways.[26]

It was just such perceptions that the nascent Nazi movement was able to exploit. At its core, the Nazis arose as a movement that cultivated an image of traditional German

nationalism, and this appearance resonated with people who longed for a return to traditional German values and culture and political, social, and economic stability. On marches, for example, the paramilitary wing of the party, the Storm Troopers or *Sturm Abteilung* (SA) would sing songs with lyrics such as:

> The SA is marching . . . for Goethe, for Schiller, for Kant, for Bach, for Cologne Cathedral. . . . Now we must work for Goethe with beer-mugs and chair-legs. And when we have won, well, then we will stretch out our arms once more and press our cultural heritage to our hearts.[27]

Even the infamous book burnings in 1933 were modeled after traditional German celebrations, with speeches, processions, and the participation of various community associations.[28] These events did not simply represent a break from the past as they are often depicted but were actually festive celebrations of traditional German identity patterned and organized in ways very familiar to Germans throughout the country. There were certainly those who saw the darker side of these rituals, such as Arnold Zweig, a Jewish veteran of the First World War and an author whose works were among those incinerated, who remarked that, "They would have stared as happily into the flames if live humans were burning."[29] He was not alone in making such a prescient observation, as a number of other observers voiced similar warnings,[30] but we cannot ignore that these ceremonies were attended by thousands of celebrating, cheering, and enthusiastic onlookers and participants. For all too many Germans, the book burnings represented the assertion of a traditional German national identity that rejected the ideas and influence of certain writers and thinkers who were seen as being somehow "alien" to the spirit and culture of the German people.

The call to the past was not the only appeal of the Nazis. The ideological underpinnings of Nazism were actually comprised of a mélange of various conceits, beliefs, and philosophies, often based on pseudo-scientific ideas and many often illogical and contradictory notions, such as their self-identification both as revolutionaries and yet also as guardians of traditional German values. The Nazis also did not simply focus on Germany's past but promised a future in which a resurgent Germany was once again marked by stability, economic opportunity, and national pride. In an era of national humiliation, the appeal of such a message was seductive because it offered the possibility of a restoration of national pride, law and order, and a return to traditional values. Central to the Nazi vision was the cultivation of a German People's Community or *Volksgemeinschaft*. The word *volk* has no exact translation into English but perhaps might best be described as an ethnic or racial community. Predating the Nazi era, the notion of *volk* originally embraced a variety of meanings and ambitions,[31] but for the Nazis, *volk* was synonymous with race; more specifically, the Aryan race.[32] The word also held deep overtones of German superiority, communitarian values, conservative nationalism, and a resistance to the forces of modernism.[33] To foster this *völkish* community, the Nazi movement placed great emphasis on uniforms, marches, rallies, and demonstrations; all intended to create and enhance a sense of membership and belonging for members of the movement. Germans were looking for community. Beset on the one side by the impersonal and alienating forces of modernity, industrialization, urbanization, and a changing moral and cultural landscape, and on the other by the political violence and polarization that were prevalent features of

postwar life, many Germans longed for a return to a traditional sense of community, national unity, and social order and stability; the precise things promised by Hitler and the Nazis.[34]

The negative side of such *völkish* nationalism, however, is that it came at the expense of those defined as not belonging. Sociologically speaking, the in-group is always defined by the out-group. The group identity of those who belong is highlighted and reinforced through contrast with those who do not belong. Nationalism has always been as much about differentiating population groups as it has been a means for building community. The sense of belonging generated by national identity is a relative thing and only exists in juxtaposition to those who are outsiders.[35] Nationalism represents an ideology of exclusion,[36] and the Nazi version was no exception to this rule. For the Nazis, their notion of the *volk* constituted a form of exclusionary ethnic and racial identity that served to provide the ideological and philosophical basis for much of its social, political, and cultural agenda. In the Nazi view, the *völkish* national community they were building consisted only of Germans of pure Aryan descent. Theirs was a utopian vision of the future in which they would build the ideal racial and national community.[37] To achieve this vision, however, they believed they first needed to identify and remove those who posed a threat to the unity and purity of this idealized community. First among these imagined enemies were the Jews.

For Hitler, his Nazi followers, and many other German nationalists, the *volk* was a community defined by race and blood, and because of this, Jews, by definition, simply did not belong, no matter their long-standing presence in many German communities. Even though Jews had been members of German communities for at least the past 1,500 years and were among the most assimilated of all of Europe's Jewish populations, they nonetheless were still defined as racial outsiders by German nationalists. The original Nazi Party platform from February 1920 asserted that "only members of the nations may be citizens of the state. Only those of German blood, whatever their creed, may be members of the nation. Accordingly, no Jew may be a member of the nation."[38] From the very beginning of their movement, then, the Nazis perceived and defined Jews as existing outside the body of the nation. In the eyes of the Nazis, Jews and other racial and ethnic groups were alien to the German national community. The antisemitism of the Nazis, however, ran deeper than simple racial prejudice. The rise of modernity, for example, as reflected in increasing urbanization, industrialization, avant garde art and architecture, jazz, and swing music, were often defined by Nazis as being Jewish in character, in other words, foreign. Similarly, the Weimar government and democracy in general were defined as being largely Jewish in spirit and philosophy and therefore alien to traditional German values.

Not only was antisemitism a central tenet of the belief system shared by Hitler, most Nazis, and many other Germans as well,[39] it also proved a useful tool that could be reshaped and repurposed as needs and circumstances dictated. What we refer to as antisemitism actually encompasses a great variety of religious, racial, and ethnic images and stereotypes, many of which are often overtly illogical and contradictory.[40] Jews, for example, were associated with and simultaneously blamed for such things as Bolshevism *and* capitalism, indolence *and* world domination, and modernity *and* primitive religious traditions. Such perceptions were not meant to be understood and analyzed rationally but were meant to appeal at an emotional level. In fact, the contradictions meant that appropriate antisemitic messages could be found for practically

any situation. It also engendered a feeling of fear that served to reinforce the notion of community and *völkish* identity. Threat always heightens in-group solidarity. Scapegoating the Jews for contemporary issues also provided easily understood and emotionally resonant explanations for otherwise inexplicable or impersonal events, and it also diverted attention away from failed policies and practices. The notorious "Stab in the Back" myth, or *Dolchstosslegend*, was initially promulgated by generals Hindenburg and Ludendorff who, rather than accept responsibility for their role in losing the war or acknowledging that Germany had been outmatched by the military and industrial capacity of its enemies, had shifted the blame onto the Jews, who they claimed had stabbed the German army in the back.[41] Such antisemitism was not unique to Germany and the Nazis but was instead common to the radical nationalism of fascism.[42]

In many ways, the Nazis and other Jew haters were the beneficiaries of a long history of antisemitic prejudice that had an ancient pedigree in the European world.[43] From the earliest days of the Christian church, through the Middle Ages and into the modern era, various forms of antisemitism had been a constant presence and had become deeply embedded within the European imagination.[44] For many, the Jews represented the "other" who had lived among them for generations but who had never truly belonged. They were, by definition, the perennial outsiders. Such a perspective was especially pronounced among nationalists and fascists of all stripes. As a political force, however, by the early 20th century, antisemitism had largely receded into the background, only to once again to become an important and prominent part of official state policy under the Nazis.[45]

Part and parcel of the belief that protecting the *volk* from enemies was necessary to reinvigorate German society, was the notion that such safeguarding was essential to ensure the survival of the Germanic people. In the eyes of the Nazis, they were engaged in a life-and-death struggle that demanded the removal of enemies from the social, political, and economic life of the national community.[46] These enemies included political, social, and economic foes, but the principal threat, according to the Nazis, was race based. Race has always played an important role in certain forms of nationalism.[47] Fascism would take this to an extreme degree. For the Nazis, they were engaged in a Darwinian struggle for survival against those who posed a biological threat because of their perceived racial inferiority.[48] Hitler summarized this conviction when he wrote, "Those who want to live, let them fight, and those who do not want to fight in this world of eternal struggle do not deserve to live."[49] Fundamental to this way of seeing the social world was a belief in the inherent inequality of racial groups. Some racial populations, in other words, were genetically, physically, culturally, and intellectually superior to others.[50] Those races that were the "fittest" would survive, while "lesser" races were doomed to extinction. This was a theme to which Hitler often returned. In one 1937 speech to construction workers, for example, he asserted that:

> It is absolutely true that first of all the law of selection exists in the world, and nature has granted the stronger and healthier the right to life. And rightly so. Nature knows no weakling or coward, it knows no beggar, etc., but rather nature knows only those who stand firm on their soil, who sacrifice their life, and indeed sacrifice it dearly, and not those who give it away. That is an eternal law of nature.[51]

It should be noted that Hitler and the Nazis did not invent such concepts. Rather, they subscribed to ideas and perceptions somewhat common to that era. After Charles Darwin published *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 and introduced the world to such concepts as evolution, natural selection, and survival of the fittest, these principles were soon applied to the human sphere. Social Darwinism, as this school of thought came to be known, held that some human populations were innately superior to other groups and therefore more fit to survive.[52] Many took the next logical step and suggested that to maintain that superiority, a society should remove those people who weakened the genetic fitness of the superior population, or as Herbert Spencer, one of the founders of Social Darwinism, wrote:

> The quality of a society is physically lowered by the artificial preservation of its feeblest member. . . . The quality of a society is lowered, morally and intellectually, by the artificial preservation of those who are least able to take care of themselves.[53]

Social Darwinism helped spawn a worldwide eugenics movement that was to prove influential for Nazi ideology and facilitated the marginalization, persecution, and extermination of groups defined as posing a racial threat. Eugenics refers to the attempts to improve one's race by applying scientific methods to guide policies determining who should and could reproduce because they were the most genetically fit. The antipode to such prescriptions were eugenics programs identifying who should be sterilized to reduce or eliminate the negative impact of those who were the least genetically fit.[54] The German version of eugenics, founded in 1905, was known as the *Gesellschaft für Rassenhygiene*, or Society for Racial Hygiene, whose primary guiding principle was the denial of medical care to those who were genetically unfit.[55] Because these eugenicists believed that by giving medical care and treatment to those least fit, the health of the race as a whole would be diminished. Medicine, in their view, should focus on the health of the race, not of the individual.[56] By the time Nazism emerged, eugenics principles were deeply embedded within German society, taught in many schools and universities, and were adopted by the developing Nazi movement. The principles of Social Darwinism and eugenics helps explain the mentality of the Nazis regarding groups they defined as constituting a threat.[57] These beliefs were fundamental to the Nazi worldview, or as Hitler himself wrote in *Mein Kampf*:

> there is only one holiest human right, and this right is at the same time the holiest obligation, to wit: to see to it that the blood is preserved pure and, by preserving the best humanity, to create the possibility of a nobler development of these beings. . . . It must set race in the center of all life. It must take care to keep it pure.[58]

Since it was believed that the Aryan race had a holy obligation and right to keep its blood pure, and because this represented an existential struggle for survival, that belief invoked a calculus of self-defense; one of the most universally accepted forms of violence.[59] The rationale of self-defense justifies extreme measures or solutions since it is carried out to protect important values or principles.[60] Perpetrators of violence tend to view their actions as constituting an appropriate response to a perceived

threat and, from this perspective, those they target have brought about their own victimization because of their actions. Victims, in the eyes of perpetrators, are never innocent, but are instead responsible for the violence they have ostensibly elicited. The Nazi worldview inverted the normal order and turned victims into perpetrators and perpetrators into victims.[61]

Providing further justification for their policies, the Nazis believed their actions were not arbitrary or simply a reflection of human choices and therefore fallible but, rather, could be understood as being true to the natural and immutable order of the natural world.[62] Because of this, they defined their policies as having a force and legitimacy that human-created rules and policies simply do not have. It was also a philosophy that did not lend itself to compromise or half measures. Because Social Darwinism suggests that life is a zero-sum struggle for survival with no in-between, it tends to encourage radical solutions.[63]

Social Darwinism facilitated the development of radical solutions to eliminate enemies and the threat they ostensibly posed and defined extermination as self-defense. Ironically, given the centrality of antisemitism to the Nazi identity, it was not the Jews who were the first victims of mass killing. Instead, the logic of killing to preserve the genetic purity of the race was first applied to the mentally and physically handicapped. From 1939 to 1941, the Nazis implemented a euthanasia program in which medical professionals systematically murdered individuals defined by the state as *lebensunwerten lebens*, or "life unworthy of life." Officially known as *Aktion Gnadentod*, or Operation Mercy Death, it is more commonly known as the T4 program, after the Berlin address of the headquarters at number 4 Tiergartenstrasse. Before being brought to an official halt by popular protest, this program was responsible for the deaths of more than 200,000 Germans who were physically and/or mentally handicapped. The victims of this program included those with depression, schizophrenia, epilepsy, and a variety other illnesses or conditions.[64] It even came to include healthy orphans, children seen as troublemakers, mixed-race children, and, in some cases, even teenagers with nothing more than acne.[65] Many of the medical professionals involved in the T4 program were later to use their lethal skillset to design and implement the Holocaust.

The ideology of eternal and merciless struggle remained a central tenet of Hitler's philosophy throughout his political life and intensified in later years. The instrument of that further radicalization was the Second World War, especially on the Eastern Front. That conflict began on 22 June 1941, when the quiet of the early morning hours was shattered by the opening barrage of Operation Barbarossa, Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union.[66] Across a 2,000-mile front line, from the Baltic to the Black Sea, artillery, tank, mortar, and machine gun fire, accompanied by waves of aircraft, heralded the start of what was to become, not only the single most destructive front of the Second World War but also the single largest military conflict in the history of the world. The invasion involved more than 3 million German soldiers and another half million troops from nations allied with the Nazi Reich.[67] The war on the Eastern Front itself involved battles and casualties on a scale that is truly hard to grasp. Of the approximately 5.5 million casualties experienced by Germany during the war, almost 3 million of them occurred on the Eastern Front.[68] The Soviet Union suffered catastrophic losses of approximately 27 million military and civilian casualties.[69] It was also a war marked by massive battles and the most brutal forms of