

## THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN EUROPE – TIMELINE 1939 - 1945

### Part A: Setting the Stage

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 1918 – World War I ends with German defeat.  
June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919 – Signing of the Treaty of Versailles  
July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1925 – Adolf Hitler's book "Mein Kampf" is published; in "Mein Kampf" Hitler states that Germany would have to start a war by 1945 at the latest.  
October 29<sup>th</sup>, 1929 – The stock market on Wall Street crashes.  
January 30<sup>th</sup>, 1933 – "Machtergreifung": Adolf Hitler becomes Chancellor of Germany.  
March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1933 – Enabling Act ("Ermächtigungsgesetz") gives Hitler dictatorial powers; German democracy is ultimately abolished.  
Spring 1933 – Hitler begins rearmament with first paratrooper regiments; between 1933 and 1939 the Nazis pursue rearmament of German army, navy, and air force to a consistently increasing extent.  
October 14<sup>th</sup>, 1933 – Germany leaves the League of Nations after only seven years of membership.  
March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1935 – Hitler violates the Treaty of Versailles by introducing military conscription.  
March 7<sup>th</sup>, 1936 – German troops occupy the demilitarized Rhineland.  
May 9<sup>th</sup>, 1936 – Mussolini's Italian forces take Ethiopia (then called Abyssinia).  
July 18<sup>th</sup>, 1936 – Civil War erupts in Spain.  
October 25<sup>th</sup>, 1936 – "Axis Alliance" between Nazi Germany and fascist Italy  
November 25<sup>th</sup>, 1936 – "Anti-Comintern Pact" between Nazi Germany and the Japanese Empire; Japan has become part of the Axis Powers.  
November 5<sup>th</sup>, 1937 – Hitler reveals war plans during Hossbach Conference.  
November 6<sup>th</sup>, 1937 – Fascist Italy joins the "Anti-Comintern Pact."  
March 12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup>, 1938 – Germany announces "Anschluss" (union) with Austria.  
September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1938 – British Prime Minister Chamberlain appeases Hitler at Munich.  
October 15<sup>th</sup>, 1938 – German troops occupy Sudetenland; Czech government resigns.  
March 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup>, 1939 – Nazis take the rest of Czechoslovakia (Bohemia and Moravia).  
May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1939 – Nazis and Italian fascists sign "Steel Pact."  
April 20<sup>th</sup>, 1939 – Hitler celebrates his 50<sup>th</sup> birthday with a gigantic military parade; he had originally planned having started his war by then.  
August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1939 – Nazis and Soviets sign a Non-Aggression Pact ("Hitler-Stalin Pact").  
August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1939 – Great Britain and Poland sign Mutual Assistance Treaty.

### Part B: World War II in Europe

#### 1939

September 1<sup>st</sup>, 1939 – The SS stages Polish mock attack on Gleiwitz radio station in Upper Silesia; the German battle cruiser Schleswig-Holstein fires at Polish fortress Westerplatte near the Free City of Danzig; this marks the beginning of World War II in Europe. The Nazis invade Poland from three directions simultaneously and employ Guderian's strategy of "Blitzkrieg" (lightning war) for the first time in military history.