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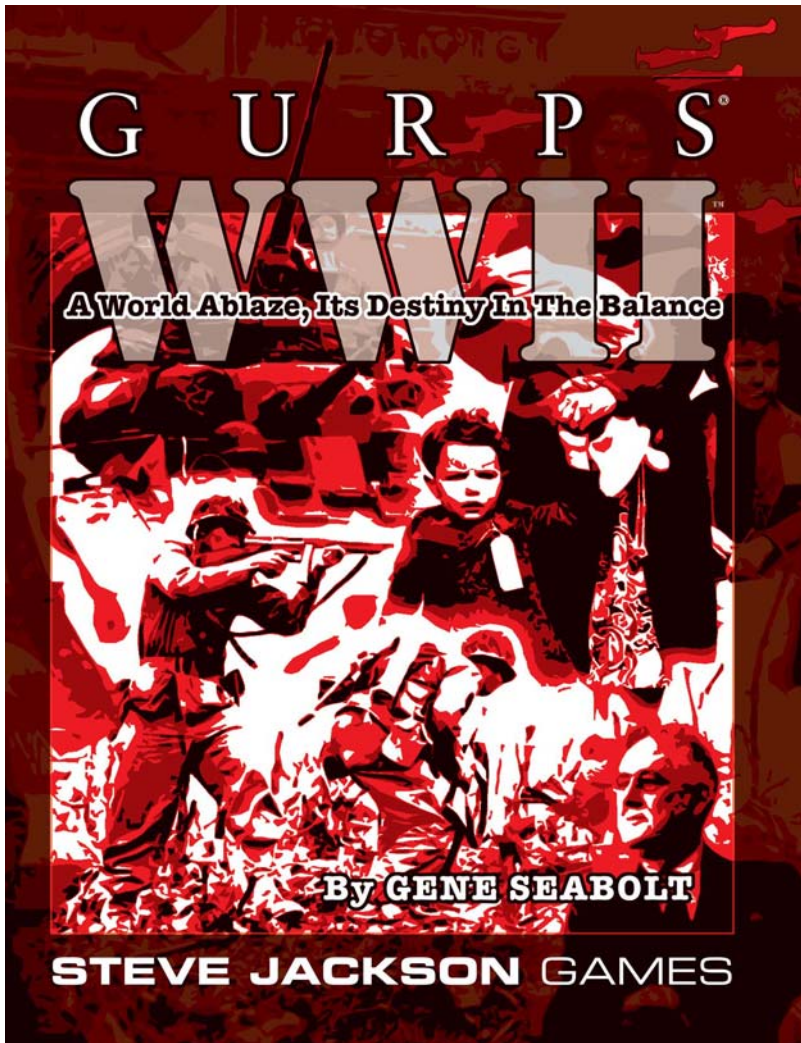
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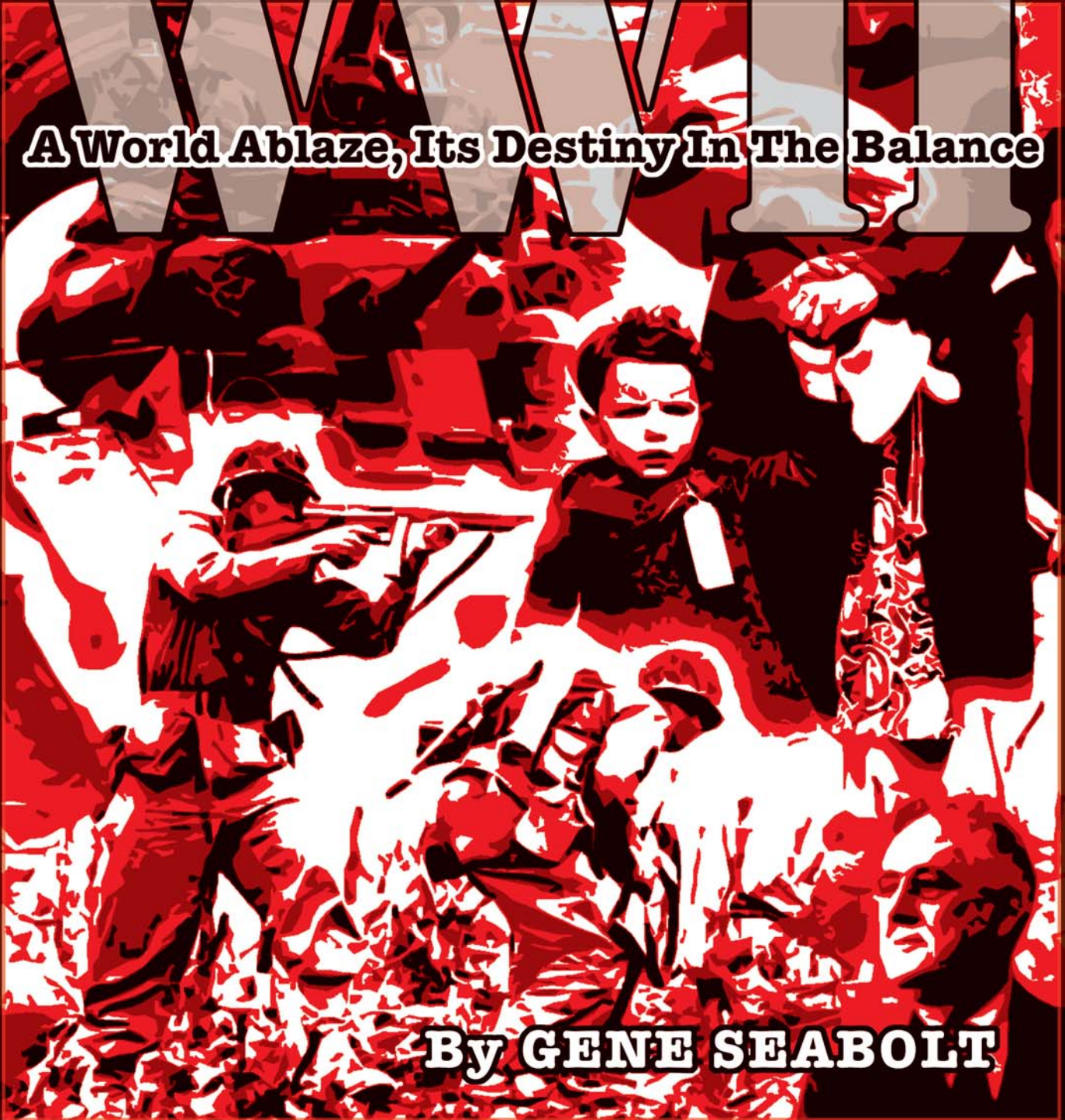


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G U R P S[®]

WWII[™]

A World Ablaze, Its Destiny In The Balance



By GENE SEABOLT

STEVE JACKSON GAMES

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This is a complete game system. *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition Revised, Compendium I, Compendium II, Vehicles, and High-Tech* can provide further detail and additional campaign options. The content can be used with any rules system.

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G U R P S[®]

WWII[™]

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ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of the *GURPS* system. Our address is SJ Games, Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! Resources include:

Pyramid (www.sjgames.com/pyramid/). Our online magazine includes new *GURPS* rules and articles. It also covers *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Traveller*, *World of Darkness*, *Call of Cthulhu*, and many more top games – and other Steve Jackson Games releases like *Illuminati*, *In Nomine*, *Car Wars*, *Toon*, *Ogre Miniatures*, and more. *Pyramid* subscribers also have access to playtest files online!

New supplements and adventures. *GURPS* continues to grow, and we'll be happy to let you know what's new. A current catalog is available for an SASE. Or check out our website (below).

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata sheets for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available from SJ Games; be sure to include an SASE. Or download them from the Web – see below.

Gamer input. We value your comments, for new products as well as updated printings of existing titles!

Internet. Visit us on the World Wide Web at www.sjgames.com for an online catalog, errata, updates, Q&A, and much more.

GURPS has its own Usenet group, too: rec.games.frp.gurps.

GURPSnet. This e-mail list hosts much of the online discussion of *GURPS*. To join, e-mail majordomo@io.com with “subscribe GURPSnet-L” in the body, or point your web browser to gurpsnet.sjgames.com.

The *GURPS WWII* web page is at www.sjgames.com/gurps/books/ww2/.

Page References

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Any page reference that begins with a B refers to the *GURPS Basic Set* – e.g., p. B102 means p. 102 of the *GURPS Basic Set, Third Edition*. Page references that begin with CI indicate *GURPS Compendium I*, CII to *Compendium II*, VE to *Vehicles*, or HT to *High-Tech*.

For a full list of *GURPS* abbreviations, see p. CI181 or the updated web list at www.sjgames.com/gurps/abbrevs.html.

INTRODUCTION

This book begins a series of *GURPS* titles on World War II. It attempts to present the facts, balanced between the poles of perspective when necessary, but without ignoring the often immense passions of the moment. It provides a terse overview of humanity's single greatest conflict as it played out, the nations who took its stage, and the people who fueled those efforts with their lives or their souls.

It also provides the rules and design systems for modeling the war with *GURPS* mechanics. All of the information essential to this book's purpose is within its covers.

Future titles will add color, and detail, and often stray from matters military, but for now we are dealing with the war at its most fundamental – men and their tools in organized, armed conflict. Despite that relatively limited scope, we don't think that we have ignored *GURPS*' strength at providing portable game concepts for cross-genre and high-weirdness campaigns. The descriptions herein will provide you with suitable villains for Golden Age superheroes to tumble by the score, proper defenders of Earth for a Wellsian alien invasion, the ancestors to modern intrigues rooted in the ashes of the Third Reich, exotic adversaries for late-era pulp heroes to pummel, the baseline for any of 1,001 alternate-history scenarios . . . or even a straightforward military campaign.

This book may not agree with every personal vision of the Second World War. Partly, this stems from the compact, iconic image that most of us have for that war – even the initials “WWII” suggest a tidy and monolithic affair, the stuff of “The Good War” or “The Great Patriotic War.”

A more intense inquiry reveals more dichotomy than dictators. The black-and-white affair of one man is a worms' nest of slithering, gray motives for another. Revisionist and/or conspiratorial counterexplanations challenge many an “established” fact about the war. An act of sacrifice that leaves one audience with eyes brimming in tears leaves another with mouths twisting in sneers.

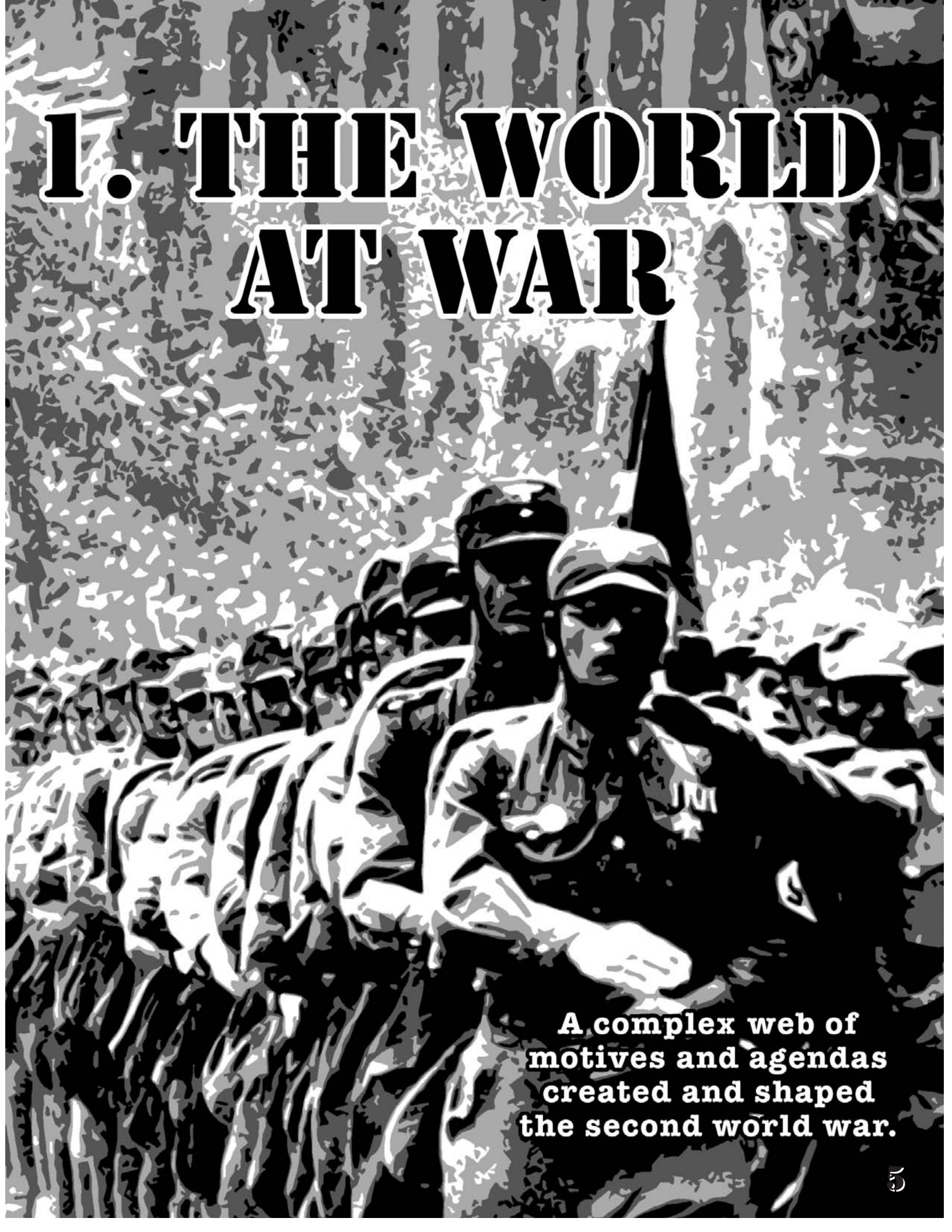
In the end, the billions of human currents that made up that flood tide of violence defy accurate charting. One can only build the largest possible body of knowledge, then find out where it leads. This book illustrates acts of the highest nobility without placing a halo upon them. It also describes the cruelest atrocities without underlining the outrage any moral observer would feel. Those exercises are left to the individual reader.

A subject so massive would have resisted our editorial efforts without a similarly massive amount of assistance. The contributors to this book may not have given blood, but they assuredly shed their share of sweat, and possibly a few tears. The editor invested money, effort, and trust in equally high measures. Those things that impress you – those things with which we hope to delight even the most serious student of WWII – are to their credit. Given an average level of subjectivity, some readers with previous interest in WWII will feel that this book contains errors of omission or misrepresentation, or even of the factual variety depending upon the source at hand. Those should all be attributed to the author.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gene Seabolt joined Steve Jackson Games in 1997 after more than a decade of newspaper reporting and editing. He has since served in a variety of roles, including his current portfolios of *GURPS WWII* line editor and production manager. He lives in Austin with his wife, Lee; son, Shane; and a player to be named later. He enjoys being fat, dumb, and happy, and hopes that his sons will possess the same luxury.

I. THE WORLD AT WAR



A complex web of motives and agendas created and shaped the second world war.

THE WAR TO END ALL WARS

Roughly speaking, World War II began where World War I left off. Known prior to 1939 as the Great War, or *the* World War, WWI left some of its survivors proclaiming that its end would introduce lasting peace. A generation later, its own child would eclipse “the war to end all wars.” In any analysis of the second war, the origins of the first one bear some attention.

Looking for Trouble

In the early 20th century, Germany could, and often did, boast of being the greatest of Europe’s Great Powers. It had the most industry, more citizens than any rival save Russia, and a Prussian-model army that kept the neighbors mindful of their manners. This all remained new and heady stuff to the Germans, who had spent centuries as a hodgepodge of bickering duchies and city-states, often trampled over by real nations in the course of their real wars.

By 1871, the Prussian Prime Minister Bismarck had changed all that, by means of a few short, decisive military campaigns. The Prussians had drubbed France, taken Alsace and Lorraine as their prize, unified Germany under their King William, and promoted William to Kaiser of the Second Reich. (The Holy Roman Empire had been the first.)

William’s successor, Kaiser William (or Wilhelm) II, wanted to emulate Bismarck’s dash, but possessed only a fraction of his good sense. Blustering and heavyhanded, Wilhelm II shaped a fervid German patriotism, and worried the rest of Europe by spoiling to further cement Germany’s place on the world stage, this time under *his* banner.

Allied to Germany, Austria felt confident in doing some shoving of its own in 1914 after Bosnian terrorists killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Austria demanded that Serbia let it investigate the assassination in Belgrade. Serbia refused, so Austria declared war July 28. Russia declared war on Austria to protect Serbia. Germany declared war on Russia, and assuming that France also was spoiling for a fight, ensured as much through haughty demands. Armies across Europe began mobilizing.

The Schlieffen Plan

The German army staff had foreseen fighting France and Russia at once. In 1905, the chief of staff, Count Schlieffen, developed a daring plan to knock out France in one blow, then turn east for the more tedious task of chewing up vast Russia.

His plan placed most of Germany’s army on its right wing facing France. These troops would drive through Belgium and Holland, sweeping down toward Paris. In the meantime, the German left wing would give way to the French. As the French pushed east, the German right’s sweep would cut off, encircle, then help destroy the pointed part of the French spearhead. Its fighting troops lost, France would have to sue for peace.

Schlieffen had retired in 1906. His successor watered down the plan that he inherited, eliminating routes through neutral Holland, weakening the right wing, and failing to understand the need to retreat on his left. Thus, when the Germans launched their gambit Aug. 17, the right wing had too

far to go. The jackbooted, *Pickelhaubed* troops still made it a near thing – pushing to within 40 miles east of Paris – but the timely French use of railroads to redeploy troops solidified the lines that they now shared with the British.

The Butcher Shop Opens

Those lines stretched 400 miles from the English Channel to Switzerland, with troops digging in and stretching razor wire along their length. With no room to maneuver, the remainder of the war on the Western Front degenerated into sheer carnage. Entrenched machine guns mowed down assaulting troops. Whole battalions disappeared in massive artillery barges. The battered earth transformed into a thin, stinking mud that could swallow up an errant soldier. Dead comrades rotted among the logs in trenchworks. Tens of thousands of men routinely died for gains measured in yards.

In the east, with fewer troops fighting in more space, Germany was winning a more traditional war of movement against Russia, despite Austria’s bumbling aid to the Central Powers’ cause. In the west, everyone was losing, and being bled dry in the process. Still, the British held the trump card, because their navy kept industrial Germany blockaded. Each passing day narrowed the odds for the increasingly hungry Germans.

U-Boats and Doughboys

Aware of their peril, in early 1917 the Germans began unlimited submarine warfare, hoping to counterstarve Great Britain. The Kaiser’s generals realized that this would propel the United States – a populous industrial giant dwarfing even Germany – to join the Entente Powers opposing them.

They had reason to hope that the war would be over before the United States could mobilize. The Russians were reeling; in March, riots broke out, and by November the Soviets had taken over from the czar and sued for peace. The war in the east was won.

If not collapsing, the French and British were at least wobbling. The Germans had been dishing out a bit more than they took in the west, and now they were beginning to find a means to make real gains through their new stormtrooper tactics. Instead of sending hordes of men forward in headlong rushes, the Germans were training their best soldiers to advance in small groups, using cover and concealment, thorough reconnaissance, and decentralized command.

The new tactics were too little, too late. The Germans did not have enough reserves behind their assault divisions to capitalize on their gains, and in June 1918 the stormtroopers ran up against fresh American doughboys. Many more were shipping over from where those came from, and the German public knew it. On Nov. 3, German sailors mutinied when ordered to steam forth on a Wagnerian do-or-die sortie. On Nov. 9, Kaiser Wilhelm conceded that the war was lost, and stepped down. The fighting ended two days later.

More than 8 million died in World War I’s meat grinder. The millions who survived it returned to civilian or public life permanently scarred.

RISE OF TOTALITARIANISM

The chaos in the Great War's wake opened the door for a variety of repressive, and usually aggressive, regimes to seize and consolidate power across the globe.

FORGE OF THE SOVIETS

Germany's terms of surrender returned the vast tracts that the Soviets had ceded in exchange for peace, but the new Bolshevik regime was not yet done fighting. An army had formed in the home of the Don Cossacks, and in 1918 began a civil war between the Whites (imperialists of one stripe or another) and the Reds (Communists).

The Entente Powers were even less fond of Communist revolutions than they were of German imperialism, so they aided what had grown to be a variety of White forces. This assistance included small naval, infantry, armor, and air forces, as well as war-surplus tanks, which had made a lackluster debut crossing the western trenches late in the Great War. The Bolsheviks countered this threat with armored cars that the British had given Russia during the Great War, and a few captured French and Polish tanks.



In 1919, the main White army spread north from the Black Sea, a sister army drove east from the Baltic, and the Poles rapidly advanced between them. In Siberia, a White force made no progress despite U.S., French, and Japanese aid, but a 100,000-man Czech ex-POW army was fighting its way back home.

Despite their gains, the Whites failed to coordinate their efforts, then fell prey to a Red army making all it could of its interior lines, transferring armies from one front to another. In an ill-run war, even a little strategic execution went a long way. By 1922, the Whites and Poles had been repulsed, and the last Entente troops left the Soviet Union. The Czechs had also made it home, after fighting both Russian armies.

Blood and Tractors

Forswearing any foreign adventures, the Soviet leader Lenin set to work rebuilding Russia's shattered economy. This required easing back on his own hard-edged Communism. His New Economic Policy legalizing small capitalistic ventures

kickstarted the Russian economy by the time of his death in 1924. A host of Soviet officials, including one Josef Stalin (see pp. WWii104-105), inherited the reins of power.

Stalin held no interest in sharing. In order to both consolidate his own power and force-feed industrialization to his country, he revitalized the Soviet secret police that Lenin had reduced in power after the Civil War. By 1937, Stalin and his NKVD ruled a country dotted with countless new factories. All of Stalin's serious rivals had been slain, along with millions of peasants, in a reign of terror spanning the 1930s.

THE NEW SAMURAI

Those last Entente troops to leave Russia in 1922 had been Japanese, a people with a recent history of lingering past their welcome on the east Asian mainland.

Realizing that global competitiveness required a true nation-state, the Japanese had modernized almost overnight in the 1860s-70s, toppling their shogun and replacing him with a strong emperor and a Prussian-style constitution. Seeking to emulate Bismarck on the battlefield as well, they invaded China in 1894, then suffered deep shame when Western powers conspired to bully them into giving up their gains. Regardless, in 1905 the Japanese navy inflicted on the Russian navy the first modern military defeat of a Western power by an Eastern rival. They then entered China to stay.

When the Great War broke out, Japan weighed its German stylings against its long, friendly relationship with Britain, then joined the Entente Powers. Probably no other country profited so much for so little in that war, as the Japanese took over German colonies and concessions in exchange for relatively light fighting that cost some 2,000 dead.

The Second Reich's collapse left Japan questioning the model for its own society. When the 1920s opened with economic collapse and natural disaster, political upheaval resulted. The military solidified its hold, with the emperor as something of an influential figurehead and the country's small group of industrialists usually bowing to the military's wishes. A civilian government existed, but if it got out of hand a dutiful officer could be found to assassinate any offending officeholders.

The Other Master Race

A deepening racism accompanied Japan's rapid social evolution. This partly stemmed from the modified *bushido* code developed in the 1870s to infuse the nation's first conscript army with a high esprit de corps. By the 1930s, racism had perverted the code to a merciless savagery, leading to the policy of "the Three Alls – Burn All, Seize All, and Kill All."

The Japanese also were reacting in kind to Western bias. The 1894 snubbing in China had created deep resentment, even more so when Russia immediately claimed similar Chinese gains without European protest. For the most part, Western powers treated Japan in accordance with the Kaiser's nickname for the race: "The Yellow Peril." The Japanese did not overlook these offenses.

ROME REVIVED

When the Great War began, Italy unabashedly bid itself out to the rival blocs, landing on the side of the Entente. Italy's army muddled along to little effect in the Alps, but afterward the nation profited with a handsome scattering of new territories.

During the war, an outspoken socialist war protester named Benito Mussolini decided nationalism and war were the right course after all. He lost his party membership, but gained a uniform and some new political backers.

Italy suffered the postwar unrest seen elsewhere. By then an ex-corporal in his mid-thirties, Mussolini proved an effective organizer, his flamboyance and oratorical skills outweighing a serious attention deficit disorder. Dressing his mostly war-veteran followers in black shirts, he formed the first Fascist party, dedicated to aggressive nationalism and combating socialists. In 1921, he won a seat in Parliament. The next year, his National Fascists marched into Rome in a gesture far more symbolic than military. A weak King Victor Emmanuel III invited Mussolini to form a cabinet.

Mussolini set about turning his position into a dictatorship. Suspending parliament in 1928 and mollifying the Catholic church by 1929, *Il Duce* (the Leader) enjoyed a solid grip on power and popularity by 1930. Given time, not all Italians would admire their erratic, boisterous Duce with a penchant for buffoonery and dreams of Imperial Roman glory, but they had to admit that things had quieted down and, at least on the surface, gotten back to business.

THE NATURE OF FASCISM

Mussolini would not be the last former socialist to become a Fascist, and at first glance it can be hard to find differences between right-wing Fascists and the leftist Communists they so vigorously opposed. Both desired totalitarian regimes with the will to spread their rule; both desired a centralized state with little room for entrepreneurial capitalism; both disregarded human rights.

The difference could be summed up as opportunism. While Communist movements sprang from sincere political principles, the Fascist movements adapted to whatever got them power quickest. Thus, they picked bloody fights with the much-feared Communists in the street, campaigned on the promise to keep the Communists from spreading more violence, and once in office took credit when they themselves quit starting fights. Communists openly preached the (often bloody) end to nobility and wealthy capitalists; the Fascists courted these factions, intending to usurp their power at the point of a gun once in control. Communists sought to abolish national and racial identities; the Fascists realized that it was far easier to rally people to an existing flag or ethnic identity than some intellectual's political-science thesis.

The Communists could be ruthless, too, a fact the Fascists didn't overlook. Once in power, they continued to hound the hard-core socialists . . . to the point of war.

THE NAZIS SEIZE POWER

In 1871, the victorious Germans had made France pay a stiff war indemnity. In 1919, the French returned the gesture. The French bill was no smaller, perhaps 15 times larger, than the original. Regardless, Germany couldn't pay it. Overwhelmed with these reparations, the newly installed liberal democratic Weimar government chose to hyperinflate away its

internal debt. This turned into paupers almost all Germans except the real-estate rich.

The Germans persevered, regaining their prewar industrial output in the late 1920s. Then the U.S. stock market collapsed in 1929. The global ripples drowned the German recovery. This was more than the nation could bear. As elsewhere, extremists had been agitating – one such group, the National Socialist or Nazi party, had attempted a 1923 Bavarian coup that earned a jail term for one of its leaders, Adolph

Hitler (see pp. WWii110-111). In the 1932 elections, Hitler took a more legitimate course. The Nazis won 230 Reichstag seats.

One Bitter Corporal

As with Mussolini, Hitler enthralled a significant portion of his countrymen, while repulsing a substantial minority. A brave and combat-tested Great War corporal, Hitler appealed to his fellow veterans' belief that less sturdy elements back home had betrayed the soldiers winning the war. He hurled new levels of invective at the Jews, a group that much of his audience already felt comfortable abusing, and one that many perceived as well worth robbing. He preached the racial superiority of the blue-eyed and blonde "Nordic race," and promised to make room to expand by expelling the Slavs to the east.

It wasn't pretty, but it did strike a nerve with a people villainized for a war that they felt they had fought in self-defense. President Hindenburg wanted nothing to do with the little Austrian import, but the army persuaded him to name Hitler chancellor in 1933. By 1935, no one (except Hitler himself) doubted the near-absolute authority wielded by *der Führer* (the Leader).

Shadow Rearmament

Even before the Nazis took power, the German people had no intention of giving up their martial prowess. France had imposed severe restrictions on the size of the German military, for fear it would be left alone to counter a German revival.

This proved a great, inadvertent boon. The German army spent the money saved on non-existent regimental messes for secret research on cutting-edge weaponry. Unhindered by making existing equipment fit, the secret general staff developed a grand vision for the future of war.

When Hitler took power, he found a thriving military machine. He happily accelerated its efforts.



Even before the Nazis took power, the German people had no intention of giving up their martial prowess.





The Road to Manchuria

The Japanese home islands never had offered an abundance of natural resources, and as the Japanese struggled to reach world-power status, they acutely felt this limitation. Furthermore, increasing trade in a depressed global market meant acquiring extremely cheap labor.

China could provide both. Having spent most of the century with authority split among squabbling warlords, China had come under the relatively far-reaching rule of Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalists by 1928. Acting without orders, Japan's Kwantung Army, which had been guarding its interests in China since 1905, attacked northeast of the Nationalists, taking Manchuria in 1931 and spreading southwest for the next four years. They turned Manchuria, renamed Manchukuo, into a Japanese industrial park.

The Chinese Nationalists and Japanese controlled the cities; out in the countryside Communists were springing up everywhere. Chiang would rather have cleaned up the Communists and remaining rambunctious war-

lords first, but in 1936 the Japanese forced them to make common cause. The combined Chinese still fell. The Japanese expanded through most of populous China by 1938, and the Nationalists joined their Communist rivals hiding in the hills.

In these conquests, the Japanese treated the subjugated Chinese and Koreans with incredible brutality. Though they had yet to announce it, the Japanese government already had begun to envision its Greater East Asia Co-Prosperty Sphere, in which a Japanese-led consortium of Asian peoples would free itself of all Western influence. The idea did not sell well, mostly because the army's blood-soaked actions spoke far louder than the civilian government's unifying words.

Adventurism in Africa

Not only did Mussolini dream of a new Roman Empire, he sincerely believed that the occasional war improved the moral fiber. Abyssinia (now Ethiopia), which lay between two Italian colonies in the horn of Africa, seemed to offer a promising candidate for both purposes.

GAMBITS ACROSS THE GLOBE

As the world's nations struggled through their recoveries from the Great War, the liberal democracies and totalitarian regimes moved in opposite directions.

Recognizing the supreme importance of self-determination in keeping the peace, the democracies moved further toward self-rule. From 1919-22, a series of peace conferences beginning at Versailles took stern measures against Germany – but bestowed their first self-rule on many other cultures. The Entente delegates dismantled the polyglot Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. The White rebels might not have recaptured Russia, but they opened the door for self-rule in the Baltic states. The British allowed the Irish Catholics to form their own nation, Eire.

This far-sightedness did not entirely apply to non-Europeans. France had no intention of giving up her colonies, but Britain began to speak of colonial administration as a temporary affair, with former colonies graduating to “dominion” status. Neither empire realistically expected to acquire new colonies in the face of U.S. and Soviet criticism.

Meanwhile, the totalitarian regimes cast a glittering eye over this state of affairs, and realized that the world had been left filled with small nations, none too powerful in and of itself . . . The liberal powers could expect to profit by trade, in what had become a fully knitted global economy. The old methods of military conquest and subjugation did more to stir the blood of men who had come to power preaching of duty and death and honor.

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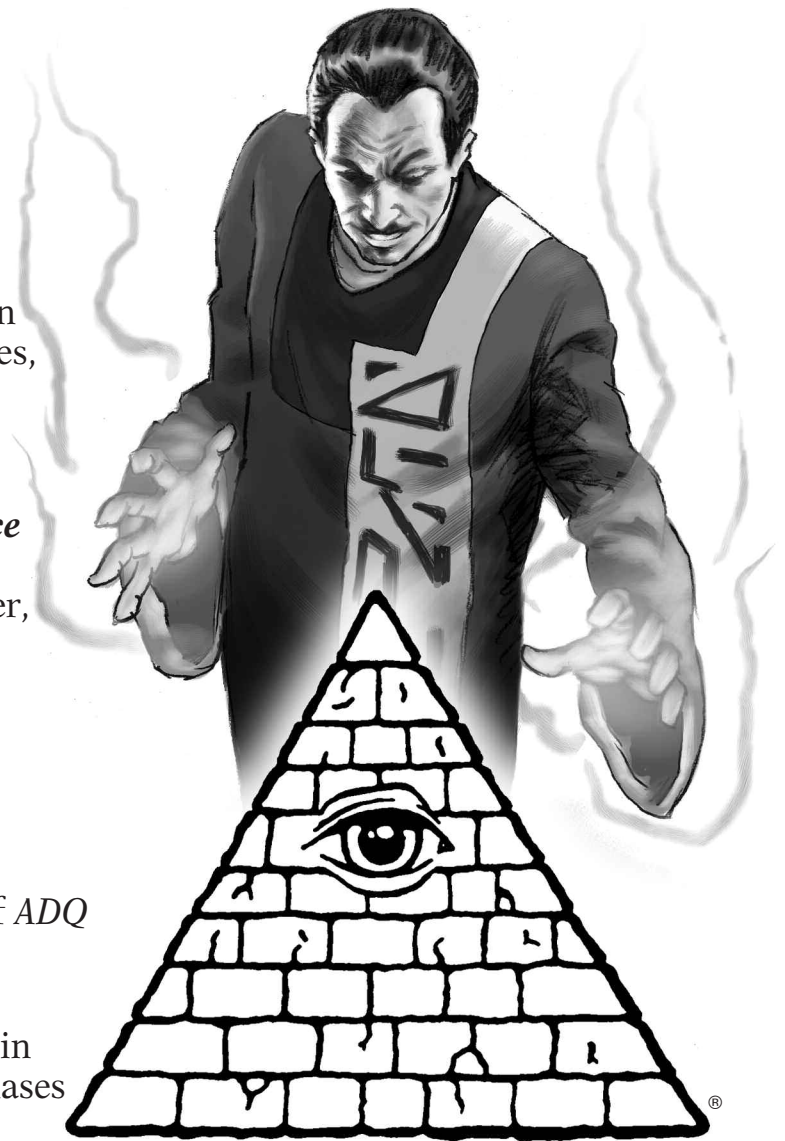
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