This was the year that Maria Theresa of the house of Hapsburg-Lorraine came to the throne of the Holy Roman empire, now considerably shrunk but still a great power. Scotland long ago had been swallowed up by England. The Bourbon Louis XV., great-grandson of the and Monarch, was on the throne of France. Another Bourbon, Ferdinand VI., was king of Spain. Also under Bourbon domination was the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Poland by this time had spread over a wide territory. Its ruler was the German-born Augustus III. Arising in Sardinia was the nucleus of modern Italy.

Here was a Europe stormier than before. Napoleon had crushed the Holy Roman empire in 1806, leaving to Francis II. of Hapsburg only Austria. The Napoleonic empire by 1810 had taken in, directly or as dependencies, all of France and of mainland Italy, most of the former Holy Roman empire, Spain, the Low Countries, the Illyrian and Dalmatian coasts, and the grand duchy of Warsaw, the last named a recreation of Poland. Great Britain, Russia, Prussia, and Austria were the enemies of Bonaparte in 1814, when his empire went to pieces. His comeback in 1815 failed on the field of Waterloo.

In March of this year Hitler consolidated his control over Czecho-Slovakia. The next month saw Italy's seizure of Albania and the flight into exile of King Zog. And now the war. Five German armies invaded Poland along a lengthy frontier, retaking the free city of Danzig, the Polish corridor, and other former German territory. Polish resistance everywhere was smothered by the power of the Germans. Moving in from the east soon after the German invasion, Russian troops advanced in Poland to the German lines. In Poland's dismemberment Germany took the western half. Russia the eastern.

On the eve of the World war, a more horrible conflict than the Napoleonic conflicts Europe has yet seen was coming. To the west, Germany had been blockaded by the Grand Alliance in 1914 and the front of 1917 had succeeded a collection of German states into an empire. The war, marked by the surrender of the Austrian Premier, Victor Emmanuel, to the Allies in 1918, left a trail of desolation from the Balkans to the Caspian Sea, and the list of independent states jumped to nearly one hundred and fifty. The central powers bore the brunt of the war, but Russia, too, was in no better shape. The satellite empires of the old German, Hapsburg, Russian, and Turkish empires were shattered. Russia, Poland, Italy, France, Russia, and America, and a number of smaller nations. The central powers bore the brunt of the war.