

**CZECHOSLOVAKIA
DURING THE
INTERWAR PERIOD
WW II IN CENTRAL
EUROPE
LIBERATION OF THE
CENTRAL EUROPE**

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CZECHOSLOVAKIA

- ◉ the First Czechoslovak republic was proclaimed on October 28, 1918 in Prague
- ◉ consisted of: Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia
- ◉ 1920 - the constitution - plural parliament democracy
- ◉ in 1920 - **Tomas Garrigue Masaryk (1850-1937)** was elected the first President (reelected in 1925 and 1929, served till 1935), he was a philosopher and politician, very influential personality, lived in exile during the WW I - Geneve, Paris, London, USA, his wife was American - Charlotte Garrigue, their son **Jan Masaryk** served later as Czechoslovak Foreign Minister
- ◉ most important and most influential political party - Republican Party of Agricultural and Smallholder People - Peasant party, they usually had a Prime Minister - **Antonín Švehla** in 1920s, **Jan Malypetr** and **Milan Hodža** in 1930s

CZECHOSLOVAKIA



The first Czechoslovak republic consisted of: Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, Slovakia and Carpathian Ruthenia (Sub-Carpathian Rus)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

- ◉ foreign policy - led by Minister **Edvard Beneš** from 1918 to 1935 - one of the most important European diplomats during the interwar period, in 1936 he was elected second President of Czechoslovakia
- ◉ 1921 - **the Little Entente** was formed - an alliance of Czechoslovakia, Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes and Romania - against Hungary and its revanchism and against restoration of Habsburgs, Little Entente was supported by France (1924 - Czechoslovak-French Agreement)
- ◉ the Little Entente was an idea of Czechoslovak Foreign Minister **Edvard Beneš**
- ◉ since 1925 - economic growth, cultural development
- ◉ the great depression since 1930
- ◉ since 1933 - Czechoslovakia was threatened by Nazi Germany
- ◉ Border fortification

LITTLE ENTENTE



Czechoslovakia +
Yugoslavia +
Rumania

CZECHOSLOVAKIA



Tomaš Garrigue Masaryk



Edvard Beneš

CZECHOSLOVAKIA



Czechoslovak fortification - Hanička
<http://www.hanicka.cz/>

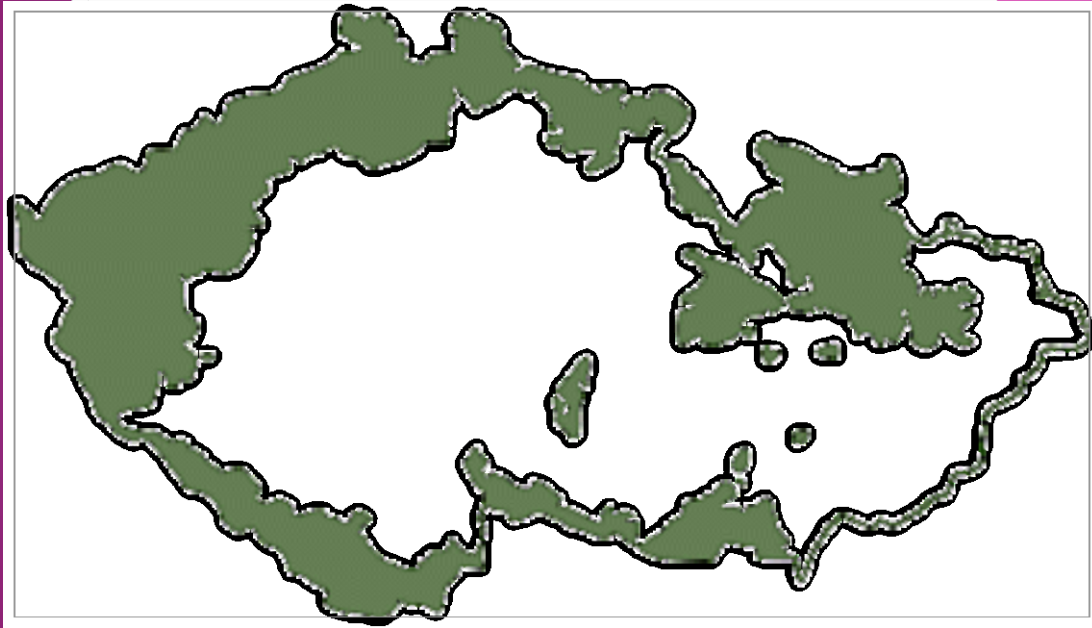


Czechoslovak fortification - Bouda
<http://www.boudamuseum.com/>

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

- ◉ *national minorities* - more than 3 million of ethnic Germans were living in Bohemian lands, they were called Sudeten Germans
- ◉ The German minority living in Sudetenland demanded autonomy from the Czech government, claiming they were suppressed and repressed by the Czech government
- ◉ In the 1935 Parliamentary elections, the newly founded Sudeten German Party under leadership of **Konrad Henlein**, financed with Nazi money, won an upset victory, securing over 2/3 of the Sudeten German vote, which worsened the diplomatic relations between the Germans and the Czechs
- ◉ since 1937 - isolation of Czechoslovakia in international politics
- ◉ policy of appeasement - the Great powers did not want to risk world peace for Czechoslovakia
- ◉ 1938 - this policy resulted in Munich Agreement

CZECHOSLOVAKIA



Sudetenland - the areas inhabited by Germans in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

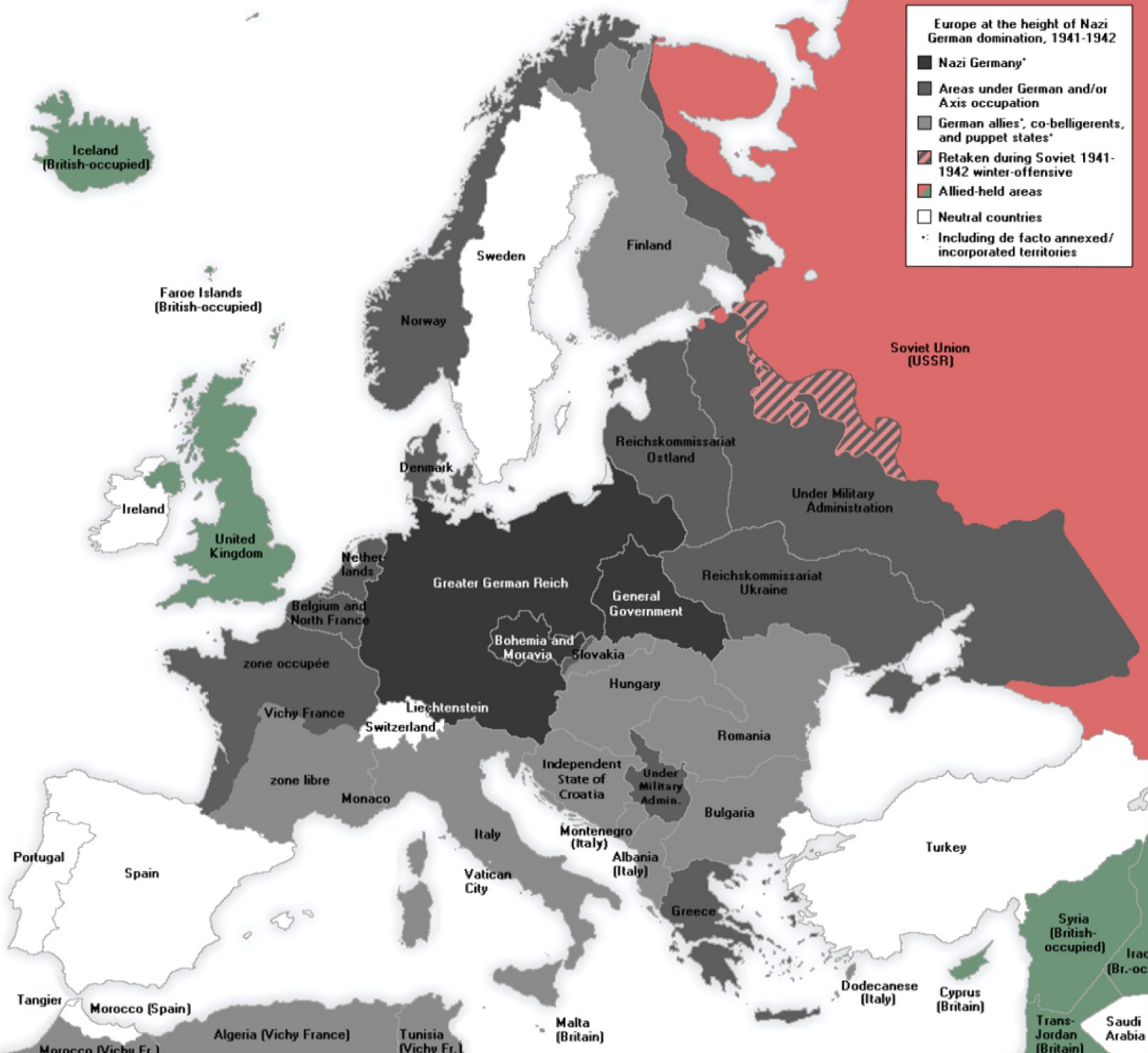
Readings:

- ◉ TUMA, Oldrich - JINDRA, Jiri (eds.): *Czechoslovakia and Romania in the Versailles System*. Prague 2006.
- ◉ LUKES, Igor: *Czechoslovakia Between Stalin and Hitler: The Diplomacy of Edvard Beneš in the 1930s*. New York 1996.
- ◉ LUKES, Igor - GOLSTEIN, Erich (eds.): *The Munich Crisis, 1938: Prelude to WWII*. London 1999.

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

Germany

- ◉ **the Third Reich - Adolf Hitler** as a Führer (Leader) - all the power centralized in his hands, nazism, Gestapo (secret police - Heinrich Himmler) - persecuting of Jews, liberals, Socialist, and Communist opposition - concentrations camps, propaganda (Minister Joseph Goebbels), economical prosperity again - preparations for the war, in 1935 - Germany began to re-arm, 1936 - remilitarization of Rhineland, axis with Italy and later also with Japan ...
- ◉ attack on Poland in September 1939, attack on France in spring 1940, autumn 1940 - the battle of Britain, June 1942 - operation Barbarossa - attack on USSR - from September 1942 to February 1943 - the battle of Stalingrad - crucial point of the war, the Soviets won and launched great offensive
- ◉ 1944 - crisis of Nazi regime
- ◉ January 1945 - Germans stopped by French and American troops at western front



Europe under
Nazi
domination

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

Austria

- ⦿ after Anschluss in March 1938 (Fall Otto)
Austria became a part of German territory
- ⦿ in April a plebiscite that confirmed
annexation of Austria into Nazi Germany

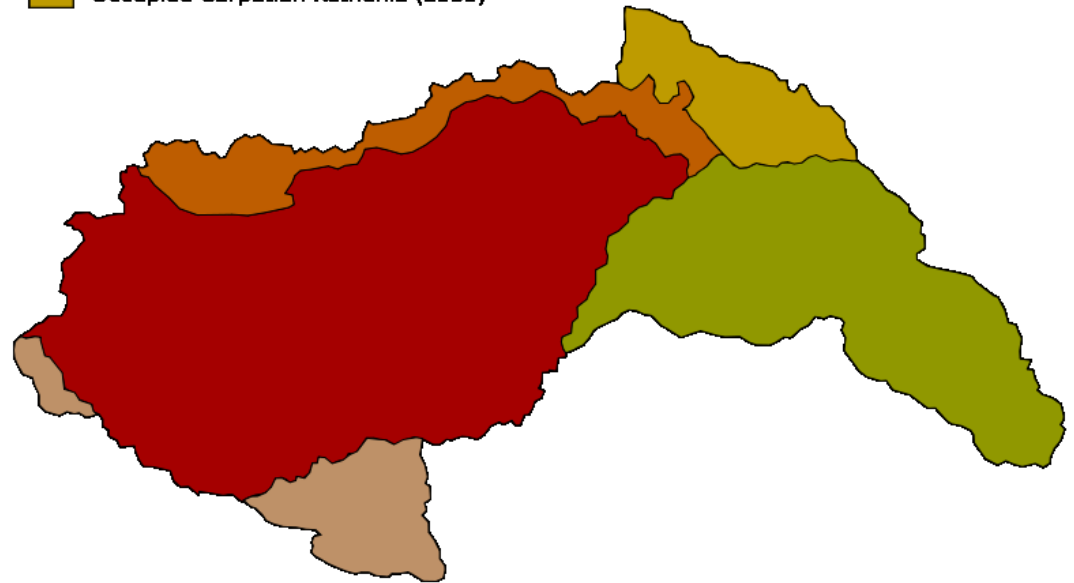
CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

Hungary

- territorial gains - from Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia
- hungarian nazism
- 1940 - joined Axis Berlin - Rome - Tokyo
- Participated on the invasions of Yugoslavia and of the Soviet Union

Hungarian Territorial Gains between 1938-1941

- | | |
|--|---|
|  Hungary (Treaty of Trianon, 1920) |  Second Vienna Award (1940) |
|  First Vienna Award (1938) |  Annexed Yugoslav Territories (1941) |
|  Occupied Carpatian Ruthenia (1939) | |



CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

Poland

- ◉ endangered by Germany but also by Soviet Union
- ◉ attacked by Nazi Germany on 1st September 1939 without declaring war on Poland
- ◉ 17th September - USSR attacked Poland and occupied eastern part of Poland
- ◉ so called New Partition of Poland - western part under German Reich, central part - General Gouvernement (with the capital city of Krakow) - the head **Hans Frank**, eastern part - occupied by USSR
- ◉ many concentration camps in Poland - Auschwitz, Majdanek, Sobibor, Treblinka ...
- ◉ segregation of Jews - a big ghetto in Warsaw - from April to May 1943 - **Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**
- ◉ of Poland's prewar Jewish population of 3 million, only about 369,000 survived the war
- ◉ Polish resistance movement - Polish government in exile with Władysław Sikorski as Prime Minister, in Poland the Home Army (Armia Krajowa) and the Peoples Army (Armia Ludowa)

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

Czechoslovakia

- ◉ in Czechoslovakia numerous German minority, Sudeten German Party with the leader *Konrad Henlein*
- ◉ April 1938 - **Carlsbad Decrees** demanding the autonomy for Sudeten Germans and the freedom to profess Nazi ideology, Sudeten Germans expected that President Beneš will refuse their exaggerated requirements
- ◉ Czechoslovak government was forced to conclude an agreement with Henlein but he refused all their suggestions according to Hitler's instructions
- ◉ several negotiations on Czechoslovakia between Hitler and British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain during September 1938:

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

- 15th September - Berchtesgaden - Great powers were putting pressure on Czechoslovak government to accept Hitler's requirements - he wanted Sudeten, firstly Czechoslovak government refused British and French pressure but on 21st September was forced to accept Hitler's requirements
- 22nd September - Bad Godesberg - new Hitler's requirements - he wanted to occupy Czechoslovak fortification and some border areas for Poland and Hungary
- Hitler announced that he will attack Czechoslovakia on 28th September (according to the Fall Grün prepared already in April 1938)
- change of the government in Czechoslovakia - Prime Minister **General Syrový**
- 23rd September - general mobilization in Czechoslovakia

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

- 29th to 30th September - Negotiations of four Great powers in Munich (Germany - Hitler, Italy - Mussolini, Great Britain - Chamberlain, France - Daladier) - about Czechoslovak frontiers and German requirements but without Czechoslovakia - France and Great Britain were Czechoslovak allies but they signed the agreement with the enemy:
- **the Munich Agreement**, Czechoslovakia (Czechoslovak troops) had to evacuate Sudeten and cede it to Germany,
- the USSR did not reply for the Czechoslovak application for the help
- from 1st to 10th October Czechoslovak borderland was occupied by German troops and annexed to Germany, Poland got the area around Těšín and Spiš, Hungary got Carpathian Ruthenia and southern parts of Slovakia
- Czechoslovakia lost 1/3 of its area, 1/3 of light industry, in southern Slovakia fertile soil important for agriculture was lost
- the First Czechoslovak republic was dissolved, so called **Second Czecho-Slovak Republic** till March 1939 - President **Emil Hácha**, no parliamentary democracy anymore
- 7th October - autonomy of Slovakia was proclaimed - **Czecho-Slovakia**

MUNICH AGREEMENT



September 1938 - Munich Agreement - lost of Sudetenland

March 1939 - establishing of Protectorate Bohemia and Moravia

March 1939 - Slovak State

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

- 13th March 1939 - Slovak Prime Minister Jozef Tiso was invited into Berlin - he was made to enforce the separation of Slovakia
- 14th March 1939 - **Slovak State** was proclaimed, dependent on Germany
- 14th March 1939 - President Hácha and Foreign Minister Chvalkovský invited to Berlin - Hitler threatened with bombing of Prague - they were forced to sign the document asking Germany for protection what was in fact forced capitulations
- 15th March 1939 - German army occupied Bohemia and Moravia - dissolution of Second Czechoslovak Republic
- 16th March 1939 - the occupants proclaimed **Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia** - it was part of German Reich, formally autonomous state with so called State President Emil Hácha and Prime Minister Rudolf Beran but the real power was in hands of Reichsprotektor **Konstantin von Neurath** and later **Reinhard Heydrich**

CENTRAL EUROPE AT THE BEGINNING OF WW II

- ◉ **Jews** were dismissed from the civil service and placed in an extralegal position,
- ◉ the Czechs launched secret resistance movement to Nazi occupation, Czechoslovak Government in exile in London
- ◉ mass demonstrations in October 1939 - the anniversary of establishing of Czechoslovakia - one student Vojtěch Sedláček was shot to death and the second one - Jan Opletal was seriously injured and died later, his funeral on 15th November became a new mass manifestation
- ◉ the Nazis started an intervention against students on 17th November 1939 - 9 students were executed, 1200 of them deported into concentration camp in Sachsenhausen, all the Universities in Protectorate were closed (→ International Students' Day)

READINGS

- ◉ Seton-Watson, Hugh: Eastern Europe 1918 - 1941. Hamden 1962.
- ◉ Rotschild, Joseph: East Central Europe between the Wars. Seattle 1974.
- ◉ Voráček, Emil and others: The Disintegration of Czechoslovakia in the end of 1930s. Policy in Central Europe. Prague 2009.
- ◉ <http://www.holocaustresearchproject.org/toc.html>

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◉ The Soviet Red Army
- ◉ since March 1943 to May 1944 - the territories in **the Ukraine** were liberated
- ◉ August 1944 - Nazi regime in **Romania** was overthrown
- ◉ September 1944 - also **Bulgaria** became a member of anti-Nazi alliance
- ◉ **Yugoslavia** - strong resistance movement - communists (Partisans) under the leadership of **Josip Broz Tito**, in October 1944 - Belgrade was liberated with the help of Red Army, the rest of Yugoslavia liberated mostly by Partisans
- ◉ from October 1944 till February 1945 - fights in **Hungary**, siege of Budapest

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◉ in April 1945 German-Hungarian forces finally pushed from Hungary to Austria
- ◉ February 1945 **Poland** (17th February - liberation of Warsaw)
- ◉ in January 1945 - the Provisional Government in Poland - with Soviet support
- ◉ members of anti-German resistance movement that remained loyal to London exile government were arrested by the Soviets, many of them exiled
- ◉ The conflict in Poland continued - since 1943 - Polish-Ukrainian War

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◉ from 29th August 1944 till the end of October 1944 - **the Slovak National Uprising** - the Partizans and members of so called First Czechoslovak Army against German occupation
- ◉ September to November 1944 - Red Army crossed border mountains after cruel fights and entered Slovakia (Battle of the Dukla Pass - 22,000 soldiers of Red Army were killed)
- ◉ then the Red Army advanced through Slovakia towards Vienna, during this advance Bratislava was liberated (4th April 1945), then Brno (26th April) and Ostrava (30th April)



General Ludvik Svoboda,
Commander in Chief of the
First Czechoslovak Army

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- western part of Bohemia was liberated by American troops under the command of general George S. Patton but the Soviets asked Americans to stop in Pilsen and not to continue to Prague
- **5th May 1945 - the May Uprising of Bohemian People** in Prague and then in the whole country
- Soviet Generals refused an offer of General Eisenhower - he wanted to send American troops to help the uprising but the Soviets wanted to liberate Prague themselves
- **8th May 1945 - liberation of Prague and the end of the WW II in Europe**

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◉ 30th April - Hitler committed suicide
- ◉ 2nd May - Fall of Berlin
- ◉ 7th May - capitulation of Germany - confirmed again at night from 8th to 9th May


- ◉ in July 1945 - the Allied leaders met in Potsdam, Germany - this conference confirmed earlier agreements about Germany - so called Programme of four D (denazification, demilitarization, democratization and decartelization)
- ◉ also the resettlement of German minority from Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary and Yugoslavia
- ◉ August 1945 - **International Trial in Nuremberg** - after almost one year of trial 12 prominent Nazis sentenced to death

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE

- ◉ Germany divided into four occupation zones - French in the southwest, British in the northwest, United States in the south, and Soviet in the east, also Berlin, which was situated in the Soviet zone, was divided into four occupation zones
- ◉ all the territories that Germany had occupied (Austria, Czechoslovakia ...) were detached
- ◉ Germany lost some territories for Poland and Russia, new Polish frontiers on the Oder-Niese line
- ◉ millions of ethnic Germans expelled from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary returned to Germany

LIBERATION OF CENTRAL EUROPE



 *The Division of Germany. Germany was divided into four zones by the victors at the end of World War II. Berlin was in the heart of the Soviet zone, East Germany, and the city itself was divided between East and West sectors.*

Occupations zones in Germany and Berlin