

**UNIT 3: INTERNATIONAL TENSIONS DURING THE 1930'S & WW II (1939 – 1945)**

**3.1.1: Terms**

***Pan-Germanism:***

- a doctrine whereby Germany could win influence over Europe and control the world through military power.

***Lebensraum:*** (living space)

- German goal of taking land in Europe to create mass living space for Germans. (belief that land was necessary for survival and growth)

***Anschluss:*** the union of Germany and Austria

***Sudetenland:***

- German speaking, northern region of Czechoslovakia that was given to Germany in the Munich Agreement of Sept 1938.

***Munich Pact:***

- an agreement signed by Germany, Britain, France, and Italy on Sept 29, 1938 to settle the crisis over Czechoslovakia, by which the Sudetenland was **ceded** (given) to Germany.

***Nazi-Soviet Pact:***

- August 1939 agreement between Germany and the Soviet Union where each promised not to wage war against each other.
- Secretly they agreed to divide Poland when Germany conquered it.
- The agreement shocked the world; would of meant that Germany would not have to fight a two front war, in essence it only delayed the inevitable clash between bitter enemies.

**3.1.2 Major Military Alliances of World War**

<b>AXIS POWERS</b>	<b>ALLIED POWERS</b>
Germany (Hitler)	United States (Roosevelt, Truman)
Italy (Mussolini)	Britain (Chamberlain, Churchill, Atlee)
Japan (Emperor Hirohito, Tojo Hideki)	Soviet Union (Stalin)

### 3.1.3 Ineffectiveness of the League of Nations (end of Unit I)

#### Introduction:

- One of the most important political issues following WW I was how to keep world peace.
- Most European nations maintained a nationalist point of view, arguing that they could pursue and protect their own national security through their own military power or by alliances.
- Following WW I, Woodrow Wilson's idealism spurred many nations to adopt the idea of global collective security.
- The basic idea was that peace was a responsibility of all nations.
- Security for individual nations would be achieved through group solidarity.
- In theory, no nation would attack another for fear of being punished by sanctions.
- The sanctions included:
  1. **Moral Sanctions:** World opinion would be used to encourage nations to behave properly.
  2. **Economic Sanctions:** In theory, nations who threatened international security would be cut off from trade by other nations.
  3. **Military Sanctions:** The restricting of the exporting of weapons and other military technology to aggressive nations would be initiated and carried out by those countries in the League.

#### Effectiveness of the League of Nations:

- After the League was formed in 1920, it was faced with solving international disputed and experienced some minor successes.
- However **without** powerful nations such as the **United States** and the **Soviet Union**, it was difficult to control international aggression.

#### Examples:

1. **Japanese Occupation of Manchuria 1931:**
  - Manchuria in northern China was rich in minerals that Japan wanted.
  - Japanese troops guarding the South Manchurian Railway alleged that Chinese saboteurs attempted to blow up a section of the railway.
  - Claiming they were protecting the railway, Japan captured all the main cities of Manchuria. Chinese leader, Chiang Kai-shek asked the league for help.
  - In 1933, after a lengthy investigation the League condemned Japan and recommended that it withdraw from Manchuria.
  - But while the League condemned Japan it did not act, and Japan simply withdrew from the League.
  - **Proved the League could not enforce its authority and showed that a major power could get away with using force.**

**2. Italian Invasion of Ethiopia (Abyssinia)1935:**

- Part of Mussolini's (**Unit II**) dream of rebuilding the Roman Empire involved capturing land in Africa. He settled on Ethiopia.
- In 1935, Italian forces with modern tanks invaded Ethiopia which was armed with old weapons and spears.
- Much of the world was outraged.
- The Ethiopian Emperor Haile Selassie, begged the League for help.
- League did 2 things:
  1. condemned the attack
  2. League members were ordered to impose sanctions against Italy.
- Sanctions failed (not all countries followed order of the League)
- League involvement proved disastrous; sanctions were a half-hearted measure
- When Mussolini threatened war if economic sanctions on oil were imposed, the League backed down.
- Later Mussolini admitted, "If the League had extended economic sanctions to oil, I would have had to withdraw from Ethiopia within a week".
- Showed unwillingness of League to intervene and damaged credibility beyond repair.

**3. German Rearmament of 1935:**

- Treaty of Versailles had imposed restrictions on German military.
- In 1930's Hitler became aware of the weakness of the League and started to rearm
- The League once again condemned Hitler's actions, but took no steps against him.

**4. German Occupation of the Rhineland 1936:**

- March 1936 Hitler ordered army into Rhineland and reclaim it for Germany
- This was a direct violation of the Treaty
- The League did not make any move to oppose Germany and Hitler took over the Rhineland

**5. Japanese All-Out War With China 1937:**

- Japan launched full attack on China and within a short while, occupied all of China
- League protested/condemned Japan but took no action
- By this time, the credibility of the League had been severely damaged and had become powerless to act

**Conclusion:**

- Never truly effective as a peace keeping organization, the lasting importance of the League lies in the fact that it provide the groundwork of the United Nations.
- This international organization formed after WW II learned from the mistakes of the League.

### 3.1.4 Germany's Reasons for Expansion in the 1930's

- Hitler turned his attention to the goal of establishing Germany as a dominant power in Europe.
- **To achieve this he violated the Treaty of Versailles**, which he viewed as humiliating and designed to maintain a weak Germany.
- He embarked on this in 1935 by re-arming and gathering personal control of Germany's military and foreign affairs.
- In Hitler's vision, a great Germany meant an expanded Germany and new territory was to be obtained through conquest.
- The fact these areas belonged to other nations was of no concern to him.
- He believed in the principle, "*might is right*," those who are fit to survive while those who are weak perish.
- He felt Germans were a superior race that should subdue and control "*lesser races*."
- Hitler also wanted Germany to be self-sufficient.
- To obtain rich agricultural land and other valuable natural resources, Germany would have to expand into Eastern Europe.
- Hitler wanted to expand the pure-blooded *Aryan* population, but in order to accommodate the increase Germany needed to increase its physical size.
- More living space (**Lebensraum**) was needed and the only way to achieve this was through the acquisition of territory.
- Another reason behind Hitler's expansion of Germany was the "need" to free Germans who were being oppressed in other lands.
- Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia were disconnected from other Germans.
- As a result, Hitler felt these people deserved to be reunited with the remainder of Germany so he conquered Czechoslovakia.
- Personal feelings also played a role in German expansion of the 1930's.
- A long-standing dream of Hitler's was the union of Germany with Austria (**Anschluss**).
- He wanted to annex Austria so that he and his fellow Austrians would be officially German.
- German expansion in the 1930's was driven by a variety of reasons.
- Hitler felt Germany had to regain its place in Europe and restore its pride as a country. The expansion was a prelude to what would soon follow in WW II.

### 3.1.5 The How and Why of Appeasement?

- The word appeasement has become synonymous with how the world dealt with Hitler prior to W.W. II.
- In practice, **appeasement** meant trying to calm international tensions by giving in or making concessions.
- During the 1930's, the European powers followed this policy when it came to the actions of Hitler and Germany.
- When Hitler violated the terms of the Treaty of Versailles by rearming and occupying the Rhineland the European powers chose to leave him alone.
- When he moved in on Czechoslovakia he was offered a deal which gave him what he wanted.
- **The policy was used in the hope of keeping the peace and satisfying the desires of Germany.**

- However, the policy backfired.
- **Hitler saw the policy as a sign of weakness.**
- Every time Hitler made a move of aggression, he was appeased.
- Realizing nobody was prepared to forcibly oppose him; Hitler became more confident with every success.
- Hitler made significant gains without a shot being fired.
- His contempt for the West and his surging confidence encouraged him to make moves of increasingly higher stakes.
- **Ultimately, the appeasement of Hitler failed as war came and Hitler did not stop his aggression.**
- So, why was this policy followed in the first place?
- What possible reasons could there be for countries to follow this policy?
- Britain and France were the prominent powers in Europe which followed the policy of appeasement.

• **They were prepared to follow this policy for the following reasons:**

**A. *Memories of World War I:***

- Britain and France were extremely reluctant to fight due to the psychological trauma resulting from having witnessed the deaths of vast numbers of young people in WW I.
- Many British urban centers lost up to 40% of all young men, many families lost all their sons and most young male relatives.
- King George V famously said that he would rather abdicate and stand in Trafalgar Square in Central London singing “The Red Flag” (socialist and communist anthem) than allow his country to go through another war like WW I.

**B. *The Flaws of the Treaty of Versailles:***

- The Treaty of Versailles imposed many restrictions on Germany’s internal affairs, which were later on, widely viewed by the Allied nations as being unfair to Germany.
- Many people, especially on the left of the political spectrum (Britain and France) argued that German rearmament, the occupation of the Rhineland and the acquisition of the Saarland were merely examples of the German’s taking back what was rightfully theirs.
- They also believed that since Versailles had created the states of Poland and Czechoslovakia on the basis of self-determination, it was unjust to deny the opportunity of Austrians and Sudetenlanders to join Germany if they so wished.
- Because Hitler had not taken any obviously non-German territory as of 1938, a war launched by the Allies at this stage would have been a war launched merely on the basis of suspicion.
- This meant that Britain would have been deeply divided about whether the war was justifiable.
- This could have been fatal if the war had gone badly for the Allies, (as indeed the war turned out to be in 1940).
- By 1939, Hitler had annexed the very non-German city of Prague – meaning that self determination could no longer be used to justify his actions.
- This made a decision to go to war in 1939 far easier than in 1938.

**C. *The Communist Threat:***

- Conservative politicians had to worry not only about the threat posed by Hitler's Germany, but also about the threat posed by the Stalinist Soviet Union – as the Holocaust had not yet occurred, they mostly regarded Stalin as the greater of the two totalitarian evils.
- The fact that the United States was at the time an extremely isolationism phase (kept to themselves) made the situation even more difficult.
- They feared that as Britain and France were busy fighting Germany in the west, the Soviets would invade Poland and then Eastern Germany.
- This would have led to a quasi – 1945 situation, but with no American army in Europe and no atomic bomb with which to deter the Soviets from invading Western Europe.
- The “German War”, would be followed by the real “World War II”, in just a few years time – a war which the Allies would almost certainly lose.

**D. *To Buy Time and Prepare:***

- In the mid 1930's, appeasement gave Britain and France time to prepare for a war.
- During the depression years nobody kept up military spending and was therefore not ready to fight any type of war.
- The years of appeasement gave the Allies some time to increase their armed forces and begin production of wartime materials and weapons.

**3.1.6 Effectiveness of Appeasement in Containing Territorial Expansion of Nazism**

- Appeasement, as a policy of containing the territorial expansion of Hitler, did not work.
- When Hitler expanded his control of various parts of Europe he was appeased for various reasons.
- From his first expansion into the Saarland in 1935 until his final unopposed expansion into Czechoslovakia in 1939 Hitler had been appeased.
- During the time of appeasement Hitler had gained a significant amount of territory (Saarland, Rhineland, Austria, and Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia) without firing a shot.
- It can be argued that appeasement allowed Hitler to expand further and at a faster rate than he could ever have wished.
- Appeasement can therefore be deemed a complete and utter failure when it came to preventing the territorial expansion of Germany.

**3.1.7 Contrasting Views of Appeasement**

- The policy of appeasement followed by the major European nations in the 1930's did not have the support of everyone.
- Those that believed in appeasement like Neville Chamberlain warned that an aggressive stance toward Germany would destroy the possibility of future negotiations.
- He believed in avoiding conflict by any means necessary.
- He arranged at the Munich Conference (aka: Munich Pact) for the Czechoslovakian territory of Sudetenland to be given to Hitler to appease the Germans.
- He returned from the conference and proclaimed:

*“I believe it is a peace for our time.”*

- Chamberlain believed that the conference in Munich had shown that appeasement achieved the purpose of avoiding war when he stated in a speech shortly after the conference:

*“...the Munich agreement has shown that four Great Powers can agree on a way of carrying out a difficult operation by discussion rather than force of arms.”*

- Meanwhile a member of Chamberlain’s own party, **Winston Churchill**, had a totally different viewpoint on the policy of appeasement.
- He believed that appeasement would not be the answer to an aggressive Hitler.
- In expressing his thoughts on what appeasement meant for England he stated:

*“England has been offered a choice between war and shame. We have chosen shame and will get war.”*

- Essentially he felt that England had been given an opportunity to make a stand but did not and had achieved nothing.
- In another speech Churchill said:

*“We have been defeated without a war. And do not suppose this is the end. This is only the first taste of a bitter drink which will be forced on us year by year. Unless we rise again and take our stand for freedom as in the olden days.”*

- Basically, Churchill had predicted that appeasement only created a situation where Hitler would continue to take what he wanted not stopped him and Britain would eventually have to stand up if Hitler was to be stopped.

### 3.1.8 Appeasement Ends With Poland

- During the 1930's Hitler had had his way and marched across Europe doing what he wanted and gaining territory virtually unopposed.
  - **However, when he attempted to take over Poland, the powers of Europe (Britain, France) finally stood up to him and appeased him no more.**
  - Hitler's desire for more territory and reunite Germans in Poland with their homeland led him to invade Poland.
  - He believed that he could win Poland by bluster and bluff as he had done in Czechoslovakia.
  - At the Munich Conference Hitler had fooled Britain and France by making a deal for the Sudetenland, then disregarding the agreement just 6 months later and taking the remainder of Czechoslovakia.
  - As a result they no longer trusted Hitler.
  - Everyone had come to realize that appeasement had been a failure, as it did not stop Hitler's aggression.
  - Hitler continued to be the aggressor in Europe as he made his feelings known on Poland in the spring of 1939.
  - He demanded the annexation of the Free City of Danzig to Germany and extraterritorial access for Germany through the Polish Corridor to East Prussia.
  - Convinced that Hitler would not negotiate in good faith, Britain and France guaranteed the integrity of Polish territory against German aggression.
  - Both of these countries had come to realize that a stand had to be taken against Germany and end appeasement.
  - **With Hitler determined to attack Poland, Europe was on the brink of war in late summer 1939.**
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- **On September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939, Germany invades Poland.**
  - **On September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939, France and Britain, declared war on Germany.**