

Paper 1

Causes of World War 2

Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in January 1933. He was determined to overturn the Treaty of Versailles and expand Germany eastwards. Over the next few years he began a programme of rearmament, reoccupied the Rhineland and occupied Austria. There was little or no opposition from France and Britain.

Hitler's aims

Hitler had several aims:

1. He believed the Treaty of Versailles was the major cause of Germany's problems. He promised the German people that he would reverse the Treaty and get back the territory of Germany had lost.
2. Unite all German speaking people under German rule.
3. He wanted to expand eastward to create more *Lebensraum* (living space) for the German people. He was looking towards Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USSR. This followed from Hitler's belief in the supremacy of the Aryan race, the 'master race'.
4. To destroy communist Russia

To achieve these aims he needed to build up the German armed forces = re-armament.

Hitler's policies 1933-36

- In 1931, 61 nations met at a conference to discuss disarmament. Hitler walked out of the conference when the other powers refused to disarm to Germany's level. This gave Hitler the legal justification to begin rearmament.
- From 1933 he began building a new air force, the *Luftwaffe*, and the following year announced conscription.
- Britain agreed to sign a naval treaty with Germany. Britain was now officially accepting German rearmament and thus the end of the military terms of the Treaty of Versailles.

The Saar

- In the same year, people in the coalmining area of the Saar, which had been placed under the control of the League of Nations for 15 years, voted by 477,000 to 48,000 to return to German control (known as a plebiscite).

Hitler sent Troops to take back the Rhineland in 1936

The reoccupation of the Rhineland, 1936

In March 1936 German troops moved back to the Rhineland. This was a calculated risk by Hitler:

- It was clear breach of the Treaty of Versailles.
- German troops were in no position to stand up to the French army if it reacted. Indeed, Hitler's troops were under strict orders to retreat if this happened.

However, there was no resistance because France and Britain was not keen to provoke Germany. Hitler's gamble paid off. This success convinced Hitler that Britain and France would not stop him achieving his aims.

Why did no one stop the takeover of the Rhineland?

1. No-one stopped them because the League of Nations was busy with the crisis in Abyssinia.
2. Britain wanted to avoid fighting, and many people felt the Rhineland belonged to Germany.
3. France had an election coming so no-one wanted to start an unpopular war over the Rhineland question.
4. The USSR had a Treaty with France, and they were disgusted that the French did nothing.

IN MARCH 1938 HITLER INVADED AUSTRIA

The *Anschluss* (union) with Austria, 1938

Hitler had been born in Austria and one of his aims was to see Germany and Austria unite as one country. By 1938 Hitler was ready:

- Hitler bullied the Austrian chancellor, Schuschnigg, into accepting a Nazi, Seyss-Inquart, as Minister of the Interior.
- Schuschnigg ordered a plebiscite (vote) to be held to find out if the people of Austria really wanted union with Germany.

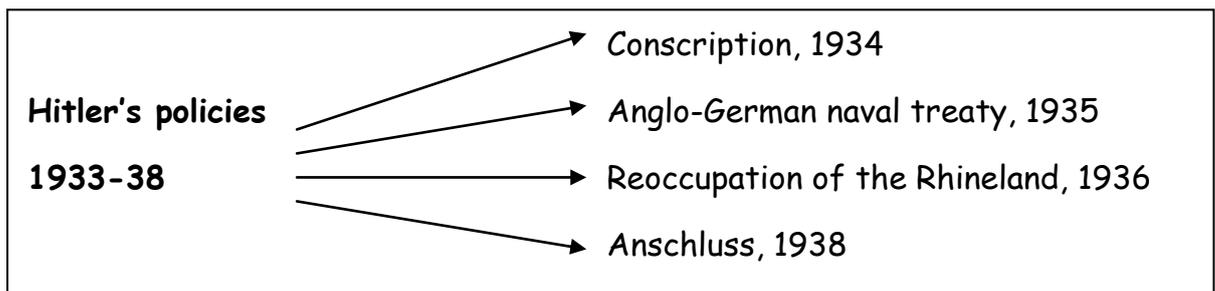
- Hitler feared a 'no' vote, so he moved troops to the Austrian border, and threatened to invade if Schuschnigg did not resign in favour of Seyss-Inquart.
- Seyss-Inquart became Chancellor and invited German troops into Austria. On 12th March 1938 the German army entered Vienna.

Hitler had once again broken the Treaty of Versailles. Britain and France did nothing.

This was because:

- Hitler was Austrian and many Austrian people welcomed the *Anschluss*. In the plebiscite over 99 per cent voted in favour of union with Germany.
- There was a feeling among people in Britain that the Treaty of Versailles had been harsh on Germany and Britain should not defend it.

Summary



WHY DID APPEASEMENT FAIL TO PREVENT THE OUTBREAK OF WAR IN 1939?

Topic Summary

Hitler had not exhausted his ambitions with the occupation of the Rhineland. Instead he turned to Czechoslovakia and the area known as the Sudetenland. German threats to invade led to the Munich Conference at the end of September 1938. Hitler was given the Sudetenland but, despite promises to the contrary, German troops marched into the rest of Czechoslovakia in March 1939. Britain and France had tried unsuccessfully to appease Hitler but refused to give way to his next demands - access through the Polish Corridor to East Prussia. On 1st September German troops invaded Poland. Two days later Britain and France declared war on Germany.

The Czech Crisis, 1938

- Hitler wanted to expand into the area of Czechoslovakia known as the Sudetenland. It consisted of 3 million German-speaking peoples.
- Hitler threatened to invade Czechoslovakia unless these demands were met.
- The British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, believed a peaceful solution could be worked out. At first he persuaded the Czech President, Benes, to agree to self-government for the Sudetenland.

The Munich Conference

- On 29-30 September 1938, Hitler met Chamberlain, Mussolini and the French Prime Minister, Daladier, at Munich. The Czechs were not invited to the meeting in which they were forced to hand over the Sudetenland to Germany.
- In this meeting at Munich both men promised that Britain and Germany would not go to war. Hitler promised that he did not want the rest of Czechoslovakia.

Chamberlain returned to Britain a hero. He had prevented war, saying the agreement was 'Peace for our time'. The results of Munich, however, were serious for Czechoslovakia and Europe as a whole:

- The Czech government was completely humiliated.
- Czechoslovakia was now defenceless: the Sudetenland contained its defences against Germany.
- Britain and France had again shown their weakness by giving way to Germany.

The Reasons for the Appeasement of Hitler

Appeasement

Britain and France followed this policy in the mid and late 1930s. It meant giving Hitler what he wanted on condition that he did not try to expand further. The two countries did not want war as they felt they were not strong enough. However, at the same time Britain and France began to rearm.

In 1938 this policy appeared to be working, but by the end of 1939 it had been shown to be unsuccessful due to the outbreak of World War 2. So was it the right policy to follow?

For:

- Britain was not ready to go to war and had to buy time to prepare.
- Germany was mistreated at Versailles and most of Hitler's demands were reasonable.
- War had to be avoided at all costs. Due to the horrors of World War 1.
- Hitler was anti-communist so he should be supported against Russia.
- By following the policy of appeasement Hitler was shown to be clearly in the wrong and a man not to be trusted, so the British people would not then hesitate to go to war.

Against:

- Appeasement was morally wrong. If Hitler used 'bullying tactics' it was up to Britain to oppose him.
- By following appeasement Britain betrayed the Austrians and the Czechs.
- Appeasement made Britain look weak and gave Hitler the confidence to step up his demands.
- Appeasement did not work because Hitler could not be trusted to keep his word.

THE EVENTS OF 1939

IN MARCH 1939 HITLER INVADED THE REST OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

1. Hitler now invaded the rest of the country.
2. Britain and France did nothing to stop him.
3. They began to realise that appeasement hadn't stopped Hitler, and that sooner or later they would have to confront him.



How Czechoslovakia was divided up

NAZI-SOVIET PACT 1939

- The USSR couldn't understand why nobody stood up to Hitler earlier. After Munich, they decided to join the German side in order to protect themselves.
- This was called the NAZI-SOVIET PACT 1939 - they agreed not to attack each other. In private they planned to carve up another country shared between themselves - Poland.

On 1st September 1939 Hitler invaded Poland. This was too much - Britain and France ordered him to leave. He refused and Britain declared war on Germany on 3rd September 1939.

