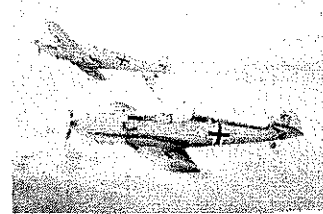
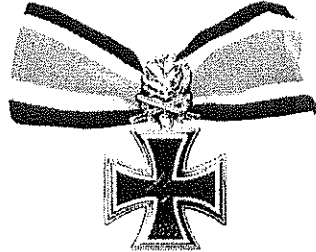


Hitler & Appeasement

The Road to World War II



Hitler had won over the German people (both legally and illegally) and had given the Germans food (farms/jobs), work (ended unemployment), and hope. He had gone against the Treaty of Versailles and started to re-arm the German military. The Germany Army (**Wehrmacht**) and the German air force (**Luftwaffe**) had over 500,000 on call at any time and introduced conscription so millions of others could also be called on if Germany needed them.

German Rearmament

- Hitler left the League of Nations and approved the German creation of U-boats, tanks, planes, and other aircraft for the Luftwaffe

Testing his Strength

By 1936 Hitler was ready to strike and show the world that Germany was no longer weak. General Franco in Spain was in the middle of a Spanish Civil War and so Hitler sent him some of the new German tanks, planes, and machines to see how they worked. They worked well. He then decided to send some of his troops into the **RHINELAND** (an area of land on the border with France that had been de-militarized since 1919). No one stopped him....

WHY NOT? = no other country could support to pay for efforts to stop him (The Depression had hit people hard)

ALLIANCES:

Hitler then started looking for alliances:

1. Germany (Hitler) and Italy (Mussolini) **ROME-BERLIN AXIS** 1936
2. Germany (Hitler) and Japan (Emperor) **ANTI-COMMUNIST PACT**
3. Germany (Hitler) and Russia (Stalin) **NAZI-SOVIET PACT**

BUT HE DIDN'T STOP THERE....

Hitler began arguing that Germans needed **LEBENSRAUM** (living space or more land) and that he would use force to get this living space if needed.

STEPS TO WAR:

Hitler takes a series of actions that no one (including the League of Nation that was created to stop aggressive powers from starting another war) stopped him.

1. Occupation of the Rhineland 1936
2. Anschluss with Austria (union) 1938
3. Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia 1938
4. Czechoslovakia 1939

How did the other Countries React to his steps?

- a) **Britain**- was VERY worried and pleaded for peace. The Prime Minister Chamberlain had met with Hitler on a few occasions and came home believing Hitler would not go to war. The final meeting was in Germany at Munich where he met with Hitler and claimed he had brought 'peace to our time'. Hitler had lied...
- b) **France**- was in ruins from WWI and from the Depression and were terrified that the Germans had taken back the Rhineland border. They could not stop the powerful Germans and no one else could help....
- c) **USA**- had a policy of *ISOLATIONISM* so decided not to get involved in Europe's problems. They had the Great Depression to deal with and conditions in USA/Canada were not ready for war or for helping anyone.
- d) **RUSSIA**- Stalin was paranoid about everyone and did not trust Hitler either. BUT....he had killed most of his Generals and knew his army was not ready for a major war. Stalin signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact hoping he could get more time to re-arm Russia and prepare for war.
- e) **ITALY**- Mussolini and Hitler had signed an alliance and Mussolini believed he could bring back the Roman Empire. He believed Hitler would win any war so he sided with the stronger power so he could take parts of Africa in the process.

Hitler had broken almost all of his promises to the other countries of Europe. He said publically that he was finished taking land, and Europe thought there would be peace.

Blitzkrieg

At 4:45 on the morning of September 1, 1939 (the morning following the staged attack), German troops entered Poland. The sudden, immense attack by the Germans was called a **Blitzkrieg** ("lightening war"). The German air attack hit so quickly that most of Poland's air force was destroyed while still on the ground. To hinder Polish mobilization, the Germans bombed bridges and roads. Groups of marching soldiers were machine-gunned from the air.

But the Germans did not just aim for soldiers, they also shot at civilians. Groups of fleeing civilians often found themselves under attack. The more confusion and chaos the Germans could create, the slower Poland could mobilize its forces. WWII had begun.

Policy of Appeasement

Hitler and Europe

It is said that Hitler did not have a well-defined program and that he was an opportunist who believed the natural unfolding of events would bring him success. Others believe that he knew what he wanted, conquering the world, and did not expect to achieve this goal without a war. Regardless of his beliefs, Hitler was able to take control of Germany and change the course of Europe.

The period of 1934-1939 witnessed a whirlwind of Nazi activity. Hitler's first moves were to concentrate political, economic, and police powers in Germany. He guaranteed jobs and introduced a four year plan in order to help industrial growth. The German economy was placed on a war-time footing in a peaceful time, in order to jump-start the German markets.

On the diplomatic front, Hitler moved to over-turn the Treaty of Versailles and Locarno agreements by recovering the lands and people stripped from Germany in 1920. He also moved to re-establish Germany's military power. In 1933 Hitler withdrew Germany from the League of Nations and proclaimed universal military training in Germany, which had been forbidden in the Treaty of Versailles. In 1936 Hitler sent troops into the Rhineland and publicly displayed military forces far beyond those allowed under the treaty provisions. Yet the League of Nations did not act.

By 1939, the Germans had a field army of 2.75 million soldiers, a combat air force of over 4000 planes, and a growing navy of surface vessels and sub-marines. Germany was producing more war materials than all the other powers combined. The revival of Germany's military power in just four years had made Hitler a national hero.

Meanwhile, Germany's neighbours, mainly Britain and France, were unsure of Hitler's goals. Britain and France were the only two powers that could have done something about the German resurgence, but they both failed to act. They were both democracies whose governments were guided by the public will: whose concerns were focused primarily on the domestic home-front.

Countries and Their Policies Towards Germany

BRITAIN: Britain did not view German re-armament as a flagrant breach of the Treaty of Versailles. The British believed German re-armament was for defense purposes, and was not aimed at France any more than the re-occupation of the Rhineland was. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain believed that once Hitler's legitimate concerns were met, the Germans would be satisfied. Even so, the British did start a modest re-armament program for its sea and air forces. Britain and the US were more concerned with Japanese expansionist aims in Asia. Hitler didn't seem like that much of a threat and used the policy of 'appeasement' to make Hitler happy.

FRANCE: After 1920 France had retreated into a defensive position behind the newly built Maginot Line. In 1933 the French economy collapsed and their military program funding had to be cut dramatically. It was not until 1937 that the government began pouring money into the military of France. However, the French military could not be compared to Germany's. In 1937 France had only 400 new air-craft. The German Luftwaffe had 5606. When Germany re-militarized the Rhineland, France was quick to look to Britain for security but both countries were ill-equipped to act to the German move.

RUSSIA: Stalin had considered two options during the 1930's. He had seen Hitler's attempts of re-claiming lost territory and saw little alliances begin to form in Europe. Stalin had two choices, he could one, form an alliance with the Western Democracies to try and limit German expansion, or two, form an alliance with Germany to regain territories Russia had lost in Poland after WWI. Stalin was undecided until 1939 when the Nazis-Soviet Pact was signed with Hitler.

ITALY: Mussolini, the Fascist Dictator, had taken control of Italy and had expansionist aims of his own. He had invaded Ethiopia and North Africa trying to expand the Italian empire. In October 1936 Hitler and Mussolini came to an understanding in the Rome-Berlin Axis. This was a pact to ally with each other in case of conflict or war.

JAPAN: Hitler signed a mutual Non-Aggression Pact with Japan in November 1936. Japan agreed to this pact because Germany assured support to Japan on an invasion against Russia. Hitler wanted Japanese support to keep the US and Britain occupied in Asia, distracted from Europe. Italy joined this non-aggression pact in 1937.

USA: Remained in isolation, not joining the League of Nations, and not getting involved in any international affairs. They were focusing more on the domestic front.

CANADA: Remained also in isolation with Prime Minister Mackenzie King not wanting Canada to become involved in another world conflict. He had hoped that Britain's policy of appeasement towards Hitler would be successful. Because Canada was still part of the Dominion, if Britain were to declare war, Canada would automatically become involved. King's concern was whether or not if he had to, should he introduce conscription again and face losing support for his Liberal Party.