

THE MOVE TO GLOBAL WAR

HITLER'S FOREIGN POLICY

AIMS:

- Revise the Versailles Treaty
- Unite all German-speaking people into one Reich
- Expand eastwards to achieve lebensraum

EVENT SIGNIFICANCE

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<i>Walking out of the World Disarmament Conference and the League of Nations (1932-1933)</i>	Hitler was invited to the World Disarmament Conference, and saw that the other countries did not want to disarm unless others around them did so too. He played on their insecurity and announced that they were not serious about disarmament, and thus left the conference and then removed Germany from the League of Nations too.
<i>Attempted Anschluss (1934)</i>	Hitler tried to have an Anschluss (union) with Austria in 1934. The Austrian Nazis attempted a coup in Austria. Austrian Chancellor Dollfuss banned the Nazi party. Hitler ordered the Austrian Nazis to create havoc in Austria, which became an attempt to overthrow the government, and Chancellor Dollfuss was murdered. However, the Austrian military intervened and broke up the coup. Also, Mussolini in Italy felt threatened by Hitler's actions and moved his troops to the Brenner Pass to caution Hitler against having the Anschluss. Mussolini succeeded and Hitler did not invade Austria.
<i>Public Re-Armament and Conscription (1935)</i>	Hitler publicly announced re-armament and conscription in 1935, and pushed the idea of 'guns before butter'. All young men had to spend six months in the RAD and were then conscripted into the army.
<i>Saar Plebiscite (1935)</i>	Hitler made sure the Saar plebiscite was organised. 90% of Germans voted for the return of the Saar to Germany. The Saar area was transferred back to Germany and Hitler got back his first piece of territory legally.
<i>The Anglo-German Naval Treaty (1935)</i>	This was a pact between Britain and Germany that allowed the Germans to increase their navy to 45% the size of Britain's. Britain essentially legalised German naval rearmament, and overturned this element of the Treaty of

<p><i>Invasion of the Rhineland (1936)</i></p>	<p>Versailles themselves. However, they were under the illusion that they had limited German rearmament so that it would not be greater than their navy.</p> <p>Hitler decided to secure his borders by remilitarising the Rhineland in 1936. This was a violation of the Versailles Treaty and he should have been stopped by Allied troops that were supposed to be stationed in the Rhineland. He moved very carefully and asked his troops to retreat if faced with any resistance at all. However, the Allied troops had left the Rhineland ahead of time and Hitler was able to invade the Rhineland without any resistance because the Allies were following appeasement.</p>
<p><i>The Spanish Civil War (1936)</i></p>	<p>Hitler supported General Franco's right-wing soldiers in the Spanish Civil War. Mussolini also supported them and so they were able to collaborate and become closer. Though they were not yet Allies, Mussolini announced that he and Hitler had formed an 'axis' - the Rome-Berlin Axis. The victory of the nationalists also gave Hitler prestige back at home.</p>
<p><i>Anschluss with Austria (1938)</i></p>	<p>Hitler convinced the Austrian Nazis to organise riots and political demonstrations to cause instability in Austria. Hitler forced the Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg to install full Nazi control in Austria. The Chancellor tried to organise a plebiscite about the Anschluss. Hitler bullied him into cancelling the plebiscite and resigning. Hitler asked the President of Austria to install the Nazi Seyss-Inquart as Chancellor. A telegram requesting German aid was sent by a German agent in Vienna, and on March 12, Germany invaded Austria and Hitler annexed Austria the next day. There was no resistance from Mussolini this time as the leaders had become closer to one another and Hitler had an improved diplomatic position. He added seven million people and an army of 100,000 to his Reich. He gained useful resources like iron ore, steel and foreign exchange. The balance of power in South-eastern Europe and the Balkans shifted towards Hitler.</p>

The Munich Agreement and the Ceding of the Sudetenland (1938)

Czechoslovakia was surrounded by Germany on three fronts, making it easier for Hitler to invade them.

Hitler wanted to invade the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia, because it had a large German-speaking population. He also wanted to invade it because it was a mineral-rich area that contained all of Czechoslovakia's military defences.

Hitler had a conference with leaders of Britain, France and Italy because he claimed that Germans in Sudetenland were being mistreated and he wanted to rescue them. The Czechs were not consulted. He demanded that the Sudetenland be handed over by 1st October (the conference was on 15th of September) and this alarmed Chamberlain of Britain. There was a danger of war now.

Hitler had a second conference with Chamberlain wherein he agreed to take the Sudetenland at a later date between 1st and 10th October. Chamberlain asked him to sign a vague pact to declare peace between Britain and Germany, which Hitler did. Chamberlain thought there was 'peace for our time' and Hitler had successfully got a part of Czechoslovakia.

Invasion of Czechoslovakia (1939)

Hitler invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia on 15 March 1939 because he wanted this to be a part of the German Empire. He bullied President Hacha of Czechoslovakia into splitting the country. He received no resistance from Britain and France - which was what he had expected. He did not expect them to take a stand against him and believed he could do whatever he liked now.

After his invasion of Czechoslovakia, however, the Allies realised they could not continue to pursue appeasement as Hitler was clearly making a bid for power and not self-determination. They decided on a policy of deterrence and decided they would not tolerate Hitler's expansionism any further.

The Nazi-Soviet (Molotov-Ribbentrop) Pact (1939)

Hitler signed a pact with the USSR in 1939, agreeing to be mutually at peace with one another. He wanted the restoration of Danzig to Germany and the return of the Polish Corridor. There was a secret clause that entailed the division of Poland between the two countries. The

countries agreed to aid one another in the case of a war against Poland.

He did this in order to not have any resistance when he invaded Poland next – he was alerted by the British-French guarantee to Poland.

Invasion of Poland
(1939)

Hitler invaded Poland on 1 September, 1939. He received resistance from the Allies – which surprised him as they had never stood up to him before. The Allies declared war on him after he did not listen to their ultimatum to withdraw from Poland.

WORKS CITED

“Why Had International Peace Collapsed by 1939?” *Complete 20th Century History for Cambridge IGCSE*, by John Cantrell et al., Oxford University Press, 2013, pp. 48-61.