

The Road to World War II The Rise of Dictators



Germany

- Adolf Hitler grew widely popular in Germany in the 1920s
- The German economy was in shambles after World War I that made many people desperate for basic needs.
- The Treaty of Versailles forced Germany to pay \$33 billion in repairs after World War I and losing 10% of her land.
- People felt that Hitler could fix the economy, and they ignored his insane ideas.
- Hitler blamed the Treaty for Germany's problems. When Germany failed to pay a reparation installment in 1922, French and Belgian troops entered German soil and seized goods. The German government ordered passive resistance but workers needed to be paid. The government printed money and **hyperinflation** set in.
- After 1929, the Great Depression acted as a catalyst, igniting the German people's anger for the Treaty of Versailles and it then became a factor in Hitler's rise to power. Germany was hit badly as America recalled the loans to Germany negotiated under the Dawes Plan (1924). In 1932, there were six million unemployed in Germany.
- Hitler's amazing oratorical, personality and leadership skills also helped him rise into power.
- Hitler rose to power and became **dictator** of Germany with his **Nazi Party** and espousing a new brand of politics called **fascism** (a blending of extreme nationalism and racism)

Italy

- Benito Mussolini appealed to Italian resentment at not gaining enough in the Treaty of Versailles
- Mussolini also practiced fascism in Italy and his Fascist party in 1922, gained enough support that the King of Italy declared him the head of government.
- Within five years he banned all political parties and **Il Duce** (the leader as he became known) became dictator ending civil liberties and the free press and enrolling boys and girls in military organizations that taught loyalty to his government and vowed to restore Italy to the glory days of The Roman Empire.
- In 1935, Italy took over Ethiopia, and the League of Nations did nothing
- In 1939, Italy annexed and took over Albania.

Japan

- Japan too suffered during the Great Depression
- Japanese unrest led to the rise in power of military leaders who thought Japan could solve its problems by gaining power in Asia especially China
- In 1931, Japan attacked Manchuria and the League of Nations took no action
- Japan set up a government in China and in 1937 invaded northern China and eventually occupied much of the country.

The Axis

- In 1934 Germany, Italy, and Japan signed a treaty of alliance known as the Axis

The Soviet Union USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics)

- In the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin rose to power as the communist leader of the **Soviet Union** (Russia before the Bolshevik Revolution)
- Stalin demanded complete obedience from his people and executed thousands he suspected of supporting his rivals
- He reorganized the economy with communist five-year plans that relocated millions to government owned farms.

The United States of America

- The U.S viewed the rapid changes taking place in Europe and wanted to avoid involvement.
- To keep the nation out of future wars Congress passed the **Neutrality Acts** between 1935 and 1937 that banned the sale of weapons of war to nations at war.
- The laws also only allowed trade with nations that could pay for goods in cash and transport the goods on their own ships.

Germany on the March

- In March 1936, Hitler ordered his troops into the **Rhineland** a territory declared as neutral by the Treaty of Versailles
- Hitler then took over **Austria** saying all German speaking peoples should be united in one nation
- The **Sudetenland**, an area in Czechoslovakia where many German-speaking people lived, was then annexed.
- Czechoslovakia was prepared to fight over the Sudetenland but Britain and France fearing a full-scale war sought a peaceful solution to the crisis in Munich Germany in 1938 where the leaders of the European nations met.
- Britain and France tried to avoid war by accepting German demands a policy that later became known as **appeasement**.
- At the Munich Conference the leaders agreed to turn over the Sudetenland to Hitler in exchange for a promise he would not expand German territory any further.
- British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain returned home declaring the agreement had preserved “peace in our time”.
- Hopes for peace vanished later in 1939, when Hitler seized the rest of Czechoslovakia
- Hitler then began planning an invasion of Poland but feared bring the Soviet Union to war with Germany. He therefore negotiated a **Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact** in August of 1939, the pact freed Hitler to use force on Poland without fear of Soviet reprisals. The pact shocked the leaders of Europe as war was now upon their doorstep.

