

# How did appeasement pave the way to war?

KS3 History- Lesson 3 of 4

Enquiry: Why did the League of Nations fail?

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# The League of Nations in the 1930s.

The **League of Nations** showed its weakness during the **Manchurian** and **Abyssinian Crises** in the early 1930s. Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933. One of his **foreign policy aims** was to expand German borders. Hitler saw that the League did not react harshly to the actions of other dictators in relation to Manchuria and Abyssinia. So he began to break terms of the **Treaty of Versailles**.

Britain and France did not want to go to war with Germany, and so followed a policy of **appeasement**. Appeasement involved giving in to some of Hitler's demands in order to avoid conflict. Appeasement also meant going against the aims of the League of Nations and the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.



# Rearmament

One of the main aims of the League of Nations was **disarmament**. The Treaty of Versailles stated that Germany was allowed 100,000 men in the army and no air-force.

In March 1935, Hitler announced that Germany had a **military** air-force (the **Luftwaffe**). He also announced that he was expanding his army to half a million men. This went against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and the aims of the League of Nations.

Britain and France **condemned** these actions, but did nothing to stop Germany. In fact, Britain actually signed an agreement with Germany saying that the number of fighting ships in the German navy could be increased to 35% of Britain's navy. This is an example of Britain allowing Germany to break the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and go against the aims of the League of Nations.



# Anschluss (union with Austria)

One of the terms of the Treaty of Versailles was that Germany was not allowed to unite with Austria. Austrians spoke the German language and Hitler, being Austrian himself, was popular with many Austrian people. He was seen as a strong leader. German forces moved into Austria in March 1938 and took over. The union with Austria was called **Anschluss**.

Hitler was again going against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles and Britain and France did nothing. Hitler could see that neither the League of Nations nor Britain and France were willing to risk going to war in order to stop him. He believed that he could now take even more land without the risk of being punished.



# Czechoslovakia

The location of Czechoslovakia meant that it could be a threat to Germany. The Czechoslovakian border went right into Germany. There were 3.5 million German-speakers living in the northern part of Czechoslovakia (also known as the **Sudetenland**).

Unlike Austria, who wanted to unite with Germany, Czechoslovakia had lots of different **ethnic groups** living in it. The Czechoslovakian government knew that if Germany took the Sudetenland, they would have no defence against Germany invading the rest of the country.



# Czechoslovakia

In September 1938, Britain, Italy and France's leaders met with Hitler in Munich. They agreed that Germany could have the Sudetenland and that Britain and France would protect the rest of Czechoslovakia. This, again, went against the Treaty of Versailles. The Treaty had taken land away from Germany and had laid out who should **govern** the different areas of Europe. The Prime Minister of Britain, Neville Chamberlain, came back from Munich and said that he had made 'peace in our time'.

Once Hitler had taken the Sudetenland, German troops then invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia. The country was fully taken over by March 1939.



# Conclusions

By 1939 it was clear that appeasement had not protected Europe's smaller countries. Hitler's actions also made it clear that the Treaty of Versailles could now be ignored.

The aims of the League of Nations were to stop war, to disarm and to uphold the Treaty of Versailles.

The **great powers** had stopped war in the short-term, by giving Hitler what he wanted. But arguably, Britain and France had also paved the way for the Second World War. By allowing Hitler to repeatedly go against the Treaty of Versailles and by giving into Hitler's demands, German foreign policy became more aggressive.



# Glossary

Abyssinian Crisis: When Italy invaded and took over Abyssinia (1935-6)

Anschluss: Germany's union with Austria.

Appeasement: In this context – to give in to Hitler's demands to avoid war.

Condemned: To strongly disagree with something.

Dictator: A ruler with total power over a country.

Disarmament: To reduce the number of weapons and the size of the army in a country.

Ethnic groups: A group of people who share the same background.

Foreign policy: The part of the decision-making of a government to do with their relationship to other countries.

Govern: To rule.

Great powers: Britain, France, Italy and Japan (although in this instance, Japan would not object to its own invasion of Manchuria).

Lebensraum: 'Living space' – Hitler's policy to expand the German nation.



# Glossary

League of Nations: The international organisation set up after the First World War, designed to solve problems through talking rather than war.

Luftwaffe: Germany's military air-force.

Manchurian Crisis: When Japan invaded and took over Manchuria (1931-32).

Military: To do with a country's fighting forces.

Sudetenland: The northern area of Czechoslovakia, given to Germany at the 1938 Munich agreement.

Treaty of Versailles: The terms of punishment to which Germany had to agree following the First World War.



# Comprehension Questions

1. What policy was followed by Britain and France in the 1930s?
2. What did Hitler do to re-arm in the early 1930s?
3. Why was it easy for Hitler to invade Austria?
4. What did Britain, France and Italy do that allowed Hitler to invade Czechoslovakia?
5. Explain how weak democracies (Britain and France) contributed to the failure of the League of Nations.

