

Hitler's Foreign Policy

Hitler's promise to make a Greater Germany of all German speakers and to create a German empire (*Lebensraum*) made him very popular. One of his main tactics in this was the threat of war, as no one wanted to go back to fighting after WWI.

Early years in power

- Germany was isolated internationally, and so Hitler had to be careful.
- He protested that Britain had not disarmed after WWI and he left the League of Nations.
- He intensified the secret rearmament.
- Austrian Nazis attempted to overthrow their government – failed.
 - Hitler supported it at first, then denounced it when it failed.
 - Italy reacted with great hostility to a possible Nazi takeover of Austria.

Hitler begins to dismantle the Treaty of Versailles (1935)

- 90% of the **Saarland** (which had been taken from Germany) voted to return to Germany.
 - Major propaganda boost for Hitler.
- Hitler announced the re-introduction of conscription and plans for an army of over 500,000.
 - Also that they would build up an air force (**Luftwaffe**) and expand their navy.
- Britain, Italy and France protested, but did nothing.
 - Britain felt bad about the harshness of the Treaty.
 - They were more worried about Stalin.
- His troops enter the Rhineland:
 - British refused to take action, so France couldn't.
 - It was a small force – he gambled and won. He knew he could push further now.

Gaining international power

- Alliance with Mussolini (**Rome-Berlin Axis – Pact of Steel** was signed later).
 - Hitler supported Mussolini in his attack against Ethiopia (which had destroyed the Stresa Front – an alliance between Italy, Britain and France to oppose German rearmament).
 - They both supported General Franco in the Spanish civil war.
- The **Anschluss**.
 - Strong Nazi party in Austria.
 - Hitler threatened the prime minister of Austria into placing Austrian Nazis in power.
 - PM tried to undo this, which annoyed Hitler, and he was forced to resign.
 - New PM invited German troops in – Anschluss.
 - British and French didn't act – **Neville Chamberlain** (PM) followed appeasement.
- Sudetenland, Czechoslovakia.
 - Good army, lots of industry, large German minority.
 - Hitler used excuse of German minority to try to take power. He encouraged rebellion and decided to attack soon if that didn't work.
 - This would lead to war, as Czechoslovakia was allied with France. Chamberlain tried to avoid it with appeasement, but Hitler made more extreme demands.
 - **Munich Conference** (which didn't include Czechs) gave Hitler the Sudetenland.
 - He then took other Czech land.
 - Britain guaranteed that they would go to war if Poland were attacked.
 - Hitler claimed he had a right to German-speaking **Danzig**.
- **Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact**.
 - They had been enemies, but Stalin was annoyed at exclusion from Munich conference.
 - They secretly divided Eastern Europe between them.
 - It gave USSR time to prep for war, gave Germans assurance that they would not get a two-front war if they attacked Poland.

IN SPITE OF THIS, BRITAIN AND FRANCE PROMISED TO DEFEND POLAND.

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HITLER ATTACKED, AND WORLD WAR II BEGAN.